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41

REGULARS

16 Letter from the Editor

18 Agenda

20 Frontrunners

25 Robb's Favourite Shop

34 Robb Concierge

35 Auctions

36 Portfolio

40 Robb Collections

46 Grand Openings

174 Robb Reader

178 The Last Word



36



74



43

52 Properties
& Gourmet

An exploration into luxury spaces
and fabulous dinners; from highly
bespoke homes to South East
Asia's first Krug Room.



22

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THEM.

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110

Style

122 A Fine Distinction

For Italian brand Loro Piana, the best textiles for you are composed of fibres thinner and softer than a human hair.

Time

126 Transcending Boundaries

Montblanc's 4810 collection in its 110th anniversary year harks

back to its year of founding, on a transatlantic voyage from Hamburg to New York.

138 Under the Tuscan Sun

To discover Panerai's history is to explore Florence, the brand's birth city where it continues to leave its imprint on important cultural and scientific touchpoints.

Wheels

146 Grand Tour-ismo

Porsche's stunning fleet takes on Langkawi's twisty roads in a road test around the island.

Money

150 Gateway Plan

Shama Medini in Iskandar Malaysia is an investment configured for the future.



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160

✦ Travel & Leisure ✦

156 In Macanese Style

St Regis Macao is the most recent reincarnation of the pomp and grandeur of New York's Astors in a modern-day Asia.

160 Bangkok Escapades

Culture and hospitality meet in a fantastical melange in three top Bangkok hotels.

✦ Savour ✦

170 Wine and Dine

The Connoisseur's Lounge and Restaurant at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club has perfected the art of wining, dining and quality Cuban cigars.



178



138



170



174

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or
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that keeps me
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AXOR CITTERIO E



Antonio Citterio

Designer - Antonio Citterio

To Antonio Citterio, the living space at home is akin to a person's "second skin", which is why his designs include just about everything that belongs in a dwelling. In his private oasis of rest, he manages to put daily stress and city life behind him. "I'd like to enhance the quality of life" - this is Antonio Citterio's challenging credo.

Axor Citterio E - The Essence of Luxury

The Axor Citterio E fixtures are characterised by a balanced contrast of smooth shapes, clean lines and precious surfaces - features of elegance and high quality respectively. Soft and slender mixer handles characterise the entire collection's design. All the products that make up this collection share a visually harmonious look that complements a variety of styles, from art nouveau to modern urban.

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FEASTING THROUGH THE AGES

With the invention of the table and promotion of friendlier relations among men (thanks to Hammurabi's codified laws), the dinner feast became a noteworthy addition to human civilisation.

The Middle Ages saw coloured jellies of swans, peacocks and pheasant served on plates of silver and gold, with even more exotic seagull and porpoise garnished with marigolds. In medieval France, the upper echelon found great favour in hare, veal and a quartered stag aged overnight in salt.

Chinese cuisine's history points to the Manchu Han Imperial Feast, comprising 108 unique dishes created by chefs across the kingdom to honour the emperor. This three-day affair was broken into six banquets and featured over 300 dishes with some fairly

outrageous ingredients: leopard fetuses, bear paws, monkey brains and rhinoceros tails.

Thankfully, the modern age brought with it an understanding of ingredients and culinary methods much less visceral in the retelling. The haute cuisine of Ferran Adria, for example, was a masterful execution of culinary genius witnessed in his now legendary steamed brioche with rose-scented mozzarella and rock mussels with seaweed and herbs.

This issue seeks out some choice dining rooms, both near and far, to highlight what the *Robb Report* reader might ostensibly enjoy. But in all this, the best advice on dining comes from Epicurus – the Greek philosopher who first inspired the art of living well – who stated: “he who eats alone, chokes alone”.

Kenneth Tan



The best cuts. The new Mandarin Grill.



EVENT GUIDE

What's worth doing this month, in Asia and beyond.

By VANESSA SIMON



White Turf St Moritz

7, 14 and 21 Feb

This unique horse race takes place in winter sunshine on a frozen lake among the stunningly beautiful, snow-capped mountains of St Moritz. Around 35,000 visitors will be cheering on the horses they have backed and enjoying top-quality catering in a number of marquees put up specially on the frozen lake. www.whiteturf.ch



The Vienna Opera Ball

4 Feb

Housed in the spectacular Opera House, the ball combines the Viennese lifestyle with international allure. Rent an eight-person box for the best seats in the house to experience an exclusive preview of 160 couples dance in the opening number for the president of Austria before the floor is opened to all. www.wiener-staatsoper.at



London Fashion Week

19 to 23 Feb

The autumn/winter 2016 show will showcase the superb collections of more than 250 designers from Britain and beyond. While you're there, get free access to the London Fashion Week pop-up for an exclusive opportunity to meet the designers behind the labels. www.londonfashionweek.co.uk



Kool & The Gang

27 Feb

Celebrate the band's unique sound which blends jazz, soul and funk. Kool & the Gang will be performing their classic hits at Singapore's MasterCard Theatres, Marina Bay Sands. Don't miss this one-night-only show by the 50-year-old band, which recently received two stars on the Hollywood and New Jersey Walks of Fame. www.unusual.com.sg

ART CALENDAR

Robb Report Malaysia presents this month's most aesthetically pleasing picks for your viewing pleasure.

By SASHA GONZALES



TAKASHI MURAKAMI'S SUPERFLAT COLLECTION: FROM SHOHAKU AND ROSANJIN TO ANSELM KIEFER

This is the first large-scale public showing of the renowned contemporary Japanese artist Takashi Murakami's private collection. It includes Japanese and Asian artefacts, European antiques and contemporary pottery. **Where:** Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan **When:** Until 3 Apr **Tickets:** ¥1,500 (RM56)

IFS, ANDS, OR BUTS

Singaporean artist Heman Chong investigates spaces between text and images, producing new ways of relating the two through seven works commissioned by Rockbund Art Museum. For *Legal Bookshop (Shanghai)*, for example, Chong has installed a working temporary bookshop in the museum that stocks only titles that help individuals navigate the legal system in China, all selected by author and lawyer Ken Liu. **Where:** Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai **When:** Until 3 May **Tickets:** RMB30 (RM20)

44TH HONG KONG ARTS FESTIVAL

This festival presents works and performances by local and international artists in all genres of the performing arts – opera, music, theatre, dance and circus. This year's artists and performers include the Debussy String Quartet, the Mikhailovsky Ballet, the National Dance Company of Korea, The Royal Shakespeare Company, and the popular 12-piece Romani Balkan brass band, Fanfare Ciocarlia. **Where:** Various venues in Hong Kong **When:** 19 Feb to 20 Mar **Tickets:** From HK\$100 (RM56)



VOGUE 100: A CENTURY OF STYLE

This landmark exhibition showcases the remarkable range of photography that has been commissioned by *British Vogue* since it was founded in 1916. Curated by Robin Muir, it features early original magazines, vintage prints and Conde Nast archival material. Work by renowned photographers including Cecil Beaton, Lee Miller, David Bailey and Irving Penn demonstrates the magic, passion, verve and vision of the publication. **Where:** National Portrait Gallery, London **When:** 11 Feb to 22 May **Tickets:** From £17 (RM107)



“I ASK LAURIE
IF IT’S POSSIBLE
TO GET TRAINED
FISH. LINDSAY
SAYS THIS IS HOW
WE KNOW I’VE
NEVER PRODUCED
A MOVIE.”

—Emma Thompson

DRAWN FROM THE DEPTHS

Wallace Chan looks to the ocean's bounty for an important debut.

By HO YUN KUAN

Wallace Chan will be making his mark as the first Chinese jeweller to exhibit at The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) in Maastricht, Netherlands, next month. Widely regarded as the world's leading art fair, the annual event will bring together more than 30,000 works of art and antiques. It is always well attended by the world's top galleries and museums, avid collectors and scholars, and counts representatives from Musee du

Louvre, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the British Museum as regular patrons.

For TEFAF, Chan will showcase his glass carvings, large titanium sculptures and jewellery. At least four art jewellery pieces will make their debut at the fair,

encompassing all that Chan is revered for – bold use of colour, fluidity in the creations, and the Wallace Cut, which carves gems from within. One of the jewellery pieces to be shown is the Fish's Whisper bangle (pictured here), depicting two fishes in a cave of corals. Fancy coloured diamonds, sapphires, blue topazes and tsavorite garnets bring this underwater tableau to life.

www.wallace-chan.com



Black Gold

Sustainably farmed caviar just got sexier.

Sourcing the sea's most exquisite roe has never been a straightforward task, let alone hunting down sustainable, consistently graded caviar. What good fortune that Khavyar knows exactly where to find them: its Osetra Belgian caviar (US\$150, RM640 for 1.05 oz), with its distinctive nuttiness, mild saltiness and dark

olive-green pearls, is just the right companion for that bottle of champagne or vodka you've stashed away for a quiet, sultry evening in with a certain someone by your side.

www.khavyar.com



Defying Gravity

A timepiece with a touch of magic.

The history and heritage of Cartier's Mystery Clocks may be seen most recently in the hands of the Cle de Cartier Mysterious Hour watch (RM245,000), which seem to float freely, decoupled from the machinery's cogs and springs. This virtuosic illusion is framed by an imposing silvered dial with a sunray design.

www.cartier.com



Top of the Pops

Montblanc takes inspiration from pop artist Andy Warhol.

Warhol famously raised the humble soup can to the status of high art in his Campbell's Soup Cans series. The Montblanc Great Characters Andy Warhol Special Edition pays tribute to this witty artwork. Images of the soup cans grace the pen cap, while the orange and blue rings on the pen echo the colours of the original.

www.montblanc.com



Less is More

Take on all terrain in Land Rover's Discovery Sport.



Land Rover's famed versatility is now manifested in its class-defining Discovery Sport, a premium compact SUV. From the five-plus-two seating (versus the traditional five seats) and nine-speed automatic transmission

to a multi-link axle for on- and off-road agility, this spunky vehicle is available in Malaysia in two variants – the 2.0L Si4 Petrol (from RM399,000) and the 2.2L SD4 Diesel. www.landrover.com.my

Winders Keepers

A rejuvenation retreat for your watches.

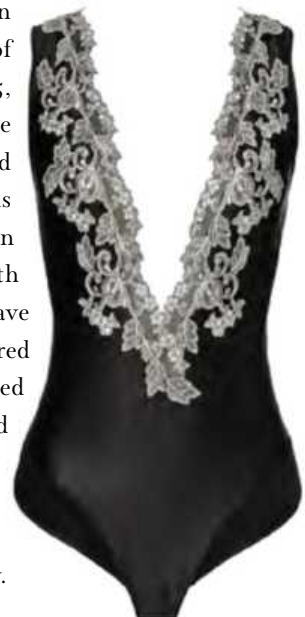


Those of us without butlers might consider putting our watches in the care of Wolf's Blake collection of watch winders. The patented winding technology is gratifyingly customisable: the rotation cycles can be set in terms of direction and turns per day. Watches will also be pampered by the luxurious ultra-suede lining. www.wolf1834.com

Sheer Delight

La Perla's form-skimming lingerie proves irresistible.

This season, seduction comes in the form of La Perla's bodysuit (\$1,245, RM3,800), which straddles the line between outerwear and innerwear with aplomb. This piece from the La Perla Maison collection pairs silk satin with see-through tulle. The weave of the lace and the embroidered motifs along the bold dipped neckline – hand-finished using a *frastaglio* technique – turns the bodysuit into a second skin, to be shed only in selected company. www.laperla.com



Vicenza Calling

Petra Antiqua creates antique marble like never before.

Italy's fascination with and craftsmanship of marble stretches back to ancient Rome. So it is only fitting that Petra Antiqua – dedicated to a new artistic elegance – should draw from handed-down knowledge, an inherent understanding of culture and performed entirely by hand. Founded by the Bressan family in Monte di Malo in the province of Vicenza, Petra Antiqua is available for the first time in Malaysia at Niro Ceramic's Group Headquarters in Shah Alam, offering consumers a chance to add refined, decorative flourishes to every room and space. www.petraantiqua.com



All Ears

Keep your tomes in order with Carl Aubock's quirky bookends.

Carl Aubock II, a Viennese artist and designer, is considered one of the quirkiest and most collectible of modern designers. This pair of solid brass, sand-cast Earlobe Book Ends (£365, RM2,340) was crafted in the same Viennese workshop founded in the late 19th century. In classic Aubock style, the bookends meld form and function, while retaining an unexpectedly charming element of humour.



www.anothercountry.com

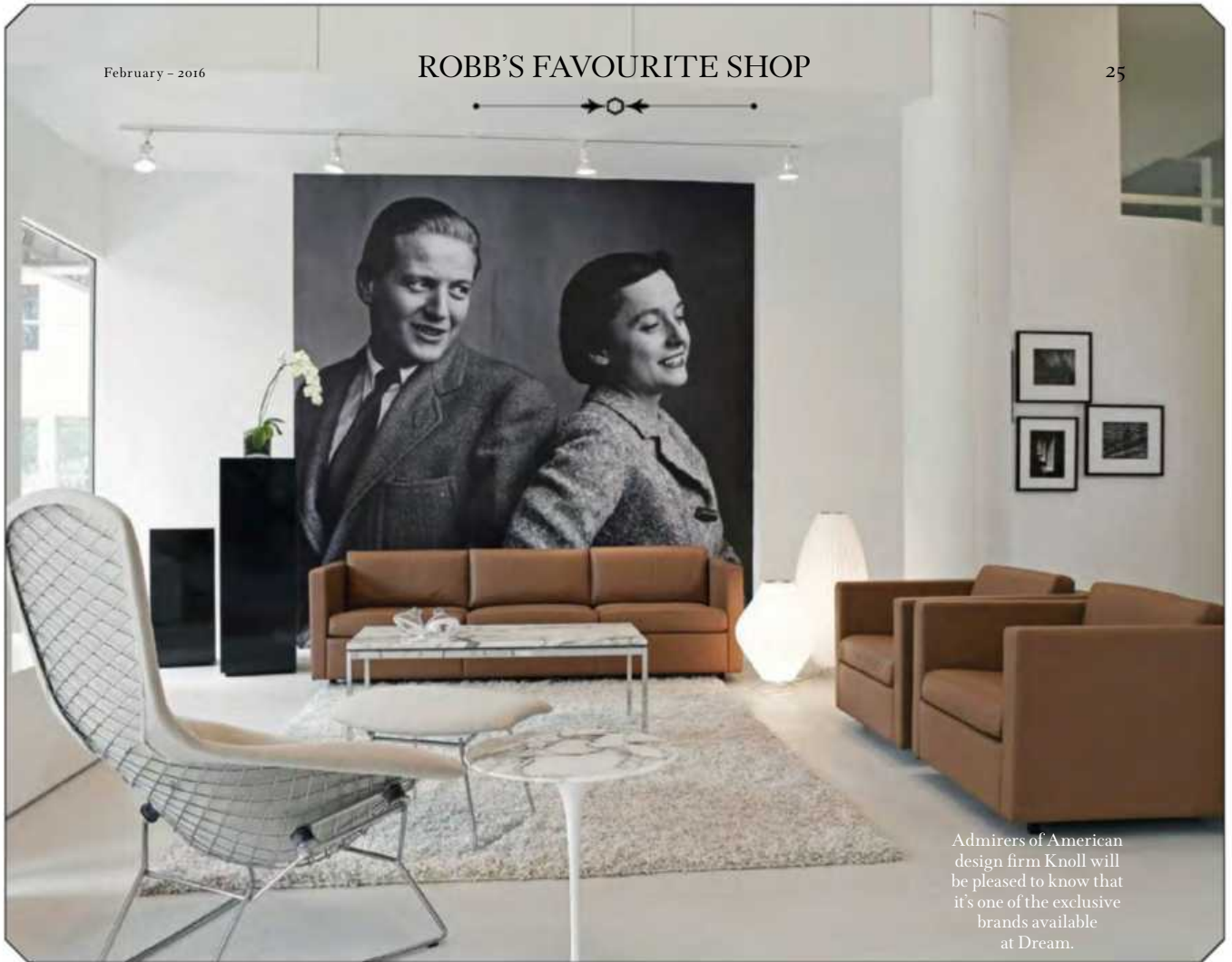
The G-Force Awakens

A new generation of Lexus SUVs has arrived.



The fourth-generation Lexus RX (from RM388,800) takes a decisive step into the future while still retaining the best of the Lexus tradition. Much-loved features remain, but Lexus aficionados will appreciate the bolder proportions. The control logic has also been equipped with a G-force Artificial Intelligence which selects the appropriate gear according to G forces being experienced.

www.lexus.com



Admirers of American design firm Knoll will be pleased to know that it's one of the exclusive brands available at Dream.

HAUTE HOUSE

Singapore-based Dream is making interior design fantasies come true.

By BEN CHIN

Standing in Dream showroom's expansive space, it's hard not to let your imagination run wild as your eyes glide over the well-curated selection of home furnishings. Founded in 2006 by Ong Kok Thai, the CEO of Vanguard Interiors, the 167sqm duplex carries 25 exclusive international brands.

Admirers of American design firm Knoll, for example, will appreciate the Platner Gold Collection, an 18-carat gold-plated finish option launched in celebration of the Platner Collection's 50th anniversary. Designed by architect and interior designer Warren

Platner in 1966, the collection was meant to be gold-plated but large-scale production was not possible with the technology available then. Luxury Italian furniture designer Cassina also pays tribute, not to a man, but to a place. The LC2 Maison La Roche leather armchair honours the 90 years that have passed since the Le Corbusier-designed Parisian home was built.

Dream's spacious, airy interiors allow the impressive range of contemporary furniture and home accessories to be showcased comfortably. Talk about living up to one's name! www.dream.com.sg

SCHOOL'S IN

Business schools
respond to the
globalisation of
the luxury sector.

By Ian Wylie

A sense of savoir faire has always been vital to the success of luxury brands. But now Europe's business schools, in the sector's traditional home, are looking to press home their advantage and pass on their know-how to a global industry entering more challenging times.

After a boom over the past two decades, the global personal luxury goods market is valued at about €224 billion (RM1.05 trillion) in annual revenue by consultancy Bain & Co. Over the past 15 years the number of luxury consumers has increased from 140 million worldwide to over 350 million.

Similarly, there is growing demand for luxury management programmes from students who find such products more tangible than services, and brands more alluring than banking. The 'big four' luxury groups – LVMH, Kering, Swatch Group and Richemont – together own more than 100 brands and continue to acquire more.

"The luxury business is becoming very professional, more global and conglomerate, so global MBAs are paying much more attention to it," says Simon Nyeck, associate professor in the marketing department of Essec in France. In response, smaller, independent companies are recognising the need for global reach and strategy.



Photo: DENIS ALLARD/REA

Essec and SDA Bocconi are offering a joint executive masters in luxury from January 2017.

Essec offers an 11-month MBA in International Luxury Brand Management at its Paris campus.

Chinese consumers, for example, account for more than 30 per cent of global luxury spending. They have been largely responsible for the shift from local consumption of luxury goods to more travel- or tourist-led spending, which now represents about half of all purchases of luxury goods.

But the recent economic slowdown in China, the strength of the pound and uncertainty over Britain's membership of the EU are among the macroeconomic factors affecting luxury brands.

"Luxury is now a global industry with global audience," says Jonas Hoffmann, professor of luxury strategy at Skema in France and co-author of the book *Independent Luxury: The Four Innovation Strategies to Endure in the Consolidation Jungle*. "For example, at present we're seeing many Chinese visiting mainland Europe and Japan instead of the UK. If a luxury brand doesn't understand how those global flows play out, they will find it very difficult to decide a strategy."

Most of the luxury management programmes are offered in traditional fashion centres such as Paris, Milan and London, home to the leading designers and luxury brands. Degrees in luxury goods, as well as MBA tracks and executive courses, have become popular in Europe at schools such as Essec, whose MBA in international luxury brand management was the first luxury-specific MBA when it launched in 1995. HEC Paris has a luxury elective on its Executive MBA, and SDA Bocconi in Milan offers MBA students a track in luxury business management in association with LVMH. Another is at London Business School, which launched its elective MBA track in luxury management in 2013.

Most of these programmes are in partnerships with local luxury brands, bringing in executives to teach or sending students on placements or projects. London Business School, for example, is a member of Walpole British Luxury, a non-profit collective that represents groups such as department

store Harrods, hotel group Maybourne and shoemaker Jimmy Choo. The MBA students also team up with the British Fashion Council to develop business strategies for independent UK brands.

Schools increasingly also sense the need to give students a more international perspective. Skema, for example, offers an MSc in luxury and fashion management taught in English at its Paris and Suzhou campuses, while its MSc in global luxury management is a dual degree taught in Paris and at North Carolina State University's Raleigh campus in the US. Essec and SDA Bocconi, which have previously worked in partnership on student exchanges and launched a double-degree MSc in management last year, are offering a joint executive masters in luxury from January 2017, taught in Paris, Milan, Bocconi's campus in Mumbai and Essec's in Singapore.

"Offering this global experience is key," says Prof Nyeck. "Only Insead, Bocconi and Essec can be considered global in luxury – the rest are just talking about it."

Bocconi associate professor Gabriella Lojacono says this post-experience, part-time executive masters will be taught over 12 months, with the 35 to 50 students spending up to 40 days across the four campuses. Giuseppe Bruno Busacca, SDA Bocconi dean, says he hopes a good percentage will come from and be sponsored by employers in the luxury industry, with customised projects helping to justify the investment.

"Essec and Bocconi are the two leading institutions in luxury, in the two leading countries," says Jean-Michel Blanquer, dean and president of Essec, who believes heritage is as important in the teaching of luxury as it is to brands themselves. As brands begin, belatedly, to more fully embrace digital sales and marketing channels, opportunities are opening up for digital marketers, digital branders, customer relationship management specialists and community managers. French ►►



►► bank Exane BNP Paribas recently forecast online luxury sales could triple by 2020.

A strategy focused on all channels means job opportunities in retail too, as brands open more stores that sell directly to consumers or convert concessions into directly operated stores. Some are diversifying into lifestyle luxury – witness jeweller Bulgari's opening of hotels.

Some of these trends will be the focus of a luxury Mooc (massive open online course), which Essec and Bocconi plan to offer from January 2016.

For Mohicka Gupta, studying in France and Italy, traditional homes of the luxury sector, was important when choosing her masters in management. Gupta, who now manages Michael Kors' flagship fashion store in New Delhi, settled on a specialised masters in luxury management run by Neoma Business School in Reims in partnership with MIP Politecnico di Milano in Italy.

"The course structure was the most exciting and innovative one I came across during

French bank Exane BNP Paribas recently forecast online luxury sales could triple by 2020.



HEC Paris was ranked second best European Business School by the *Financial Times* last year.

my research," says Gupta, who graduated in 2014. "I was also attracted to the opportunity of spending time in the two biggest fashion capitals of the world, as well as Gucci's involvement with the syllabus."

Highlights of the programme for her included meeting leading luxury brand executives such as Micaela Le Divelec, chief financial officer of Gucci, and Krug Champagne chief executive Margareth Henriquez. "Visits to the world's best and oldest champagne houses in Epernay and the Gucci HQ and factory in Italy were the cherries on top," she says.

Since returning to India, Gupta has established a foothold in the country's luxury sector thanks to her masters. A role as acting boutique manager at Christian Dior was followed by her appointment as flagship store manager at Michael Kors. She has taken on the additional role of customer relationship management planner for the brand across India, and is to be promoted to regional operations manager this year. She says she has already applied several of the processes she learnt on her course at her stores. "Each class I took has turned out to be of some benefit to me during my stints at Dior and Michael Kors," she explains. "But the most beneficial has been the corporate accounting and financial management modules, which have enabled me to understand the profit-and-loss sheets of my brand and stores for planning purposes, as well as the operations management module for the day-to-day running of the stores." 

Barry Callebaut has started sales of "heat-resistant" chocolate, which it hopes will help its expansion.

Photo: IMAGEMORE CO LTD/CORBIS



Loco for Cocoa

The quest for a luxury chocolate that doesn't melt.

By Ralph Atkins



Whether wrapped in sparkling paper, shaped as Christmas decorations or as simple bars, luxury chocolate has long proved difficult for manufacturers to sell in warm climates – it melts before reaching consumers' mouths.

That is about to change, believes a Swiss company that is the world's largest maker of chocolate and cocoa products by volume. Barry Callebaut has started sales of "heat-resistant" chocolate, which it hopes will help its expansion beyond mature chocolate markets in Europe and the Americas.

Chocolate that can resist temperatures of up to 38 degrees Celsius – four degrees more than normal – without sacrificing taste could "fundamentally change the game", Antoine de Saint-Affrique, Barry Callebaut's chief executive, told the *Financial Times*. "You remove all kinds of barriers for your customers. Not all (retail) stores are air-conditioned. You can transport it more easily. Therefore you can have a different kind of reach."

Heat-resistant chocolate is not new. Hershey, the US maker, provided "tropical chocolate" bars to American soldiers during the Second World War and also satisfied the US military's chocolate cravings in the early 1990s Gulf war. This year, however, has seen chocolate manufacturers intensifying efforts to perfect temperature-tolerant products.

Driving the push have been signs of demand stagnating in home markets, says Jack Skelly, food analyst at Euromonitor. "Growth in Europe and North America is slowing down," he said. "But in for instance Middle East countries, chocolate is still less popular than biscuits or cakes. Chocolate is expensive, there is a lack of distribution networks and retailers with chilled storage. Heat-resistant products solve at least half the problem".

If Zurich-based Barry Callebaut has an innovative lead, it may not last long.

Switzerland-based Nestle, the world's biggest food and drinks company, which has research facilities in the UK, also believes it has mastered the technology required to keep chocolate firm until consumed, with product launches expected within three years.

Hershey says it has successfully consumer-tested a new generation of better tasting, heat-resistant chocolate products for introduction into "selected markets outside the US" during 2016. 

Whisky In A Jar

Charting the highs and lows of whisky.

By Aliya Ram

Deep in rural Perthshire in central Scotland, a banker-turned-entrepreneur is becoming the go-to expert for a growing band of investors looking to make money from buying and selling the so-called "water of life".

For a long time rare whisky has been a niche market where trading is carried out through contacts and valuations are negotiated on an ad hoc, subjective basis. But Andy Simpson, armed with a database of historical sales compiled by hand over 15 years, thinks he can make it easier to discover the value of a bottle of whisky.

"What (I) did was commoditise single-malt Scotch whisky and prove beyond doubt whether whisky can go up in value," he says, describing the origins of his research and brokerage company Rare Whisky 101.

Simpson and his partner David Robertson use more than 130,000 pieces of data related to international sales, vintage, bottlers and distilleries to provide instant online valuations. They publish market reports on the sector, produce an "FTSE of the value of whisky" that charts prices in the market and introduce sellers of higher-value whiskies to potential buyers. In August they reported that sales of single malt in the UK had increased by 35 per cent in the first half of 2015 compared with 2014.

Simpson says one of the standout sales was a bottle of Caol Ila Manager's Dram given to employees at Caol Ila distillery in 1990 and sold at auction in 2009 for £380 (RM2,420). A bottle was bought in August last year for £2,100 (RM13,420).

Simpson describes himself as the tech analyst of the pair at Rare Whisky 101, while Robertson is a former master distiller of Macallan in Moray. "He is whisky distilling royalty," Simpson says.

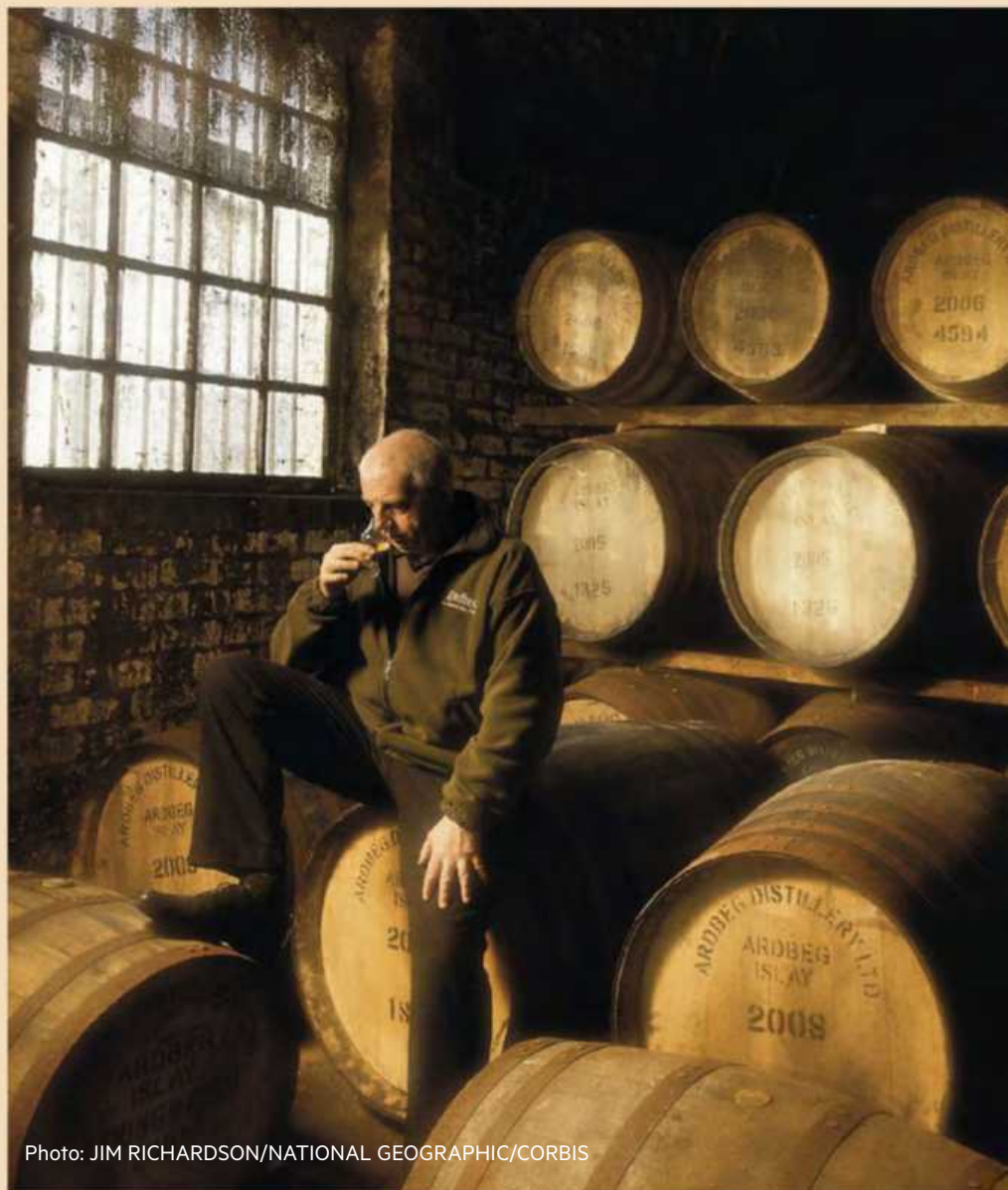


Photo: JIM RICHARDSON/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC/CORBIS

Simpson's love of the rare whisky industry is matched by a passion for the spirit, which began when he was given a book from his father who said they would "drink their way through every distillery in Scotland".

When he started, he says many in the industry resisted the idea that rare whisky could be commercialised. "There were some people out there who (thought) vehemently, massively, that whisky is a drink ... and to do anything else with it is sacrilege."

But the market value of a bottle of Scotch will always be underpinned by its "drinkability", he adds, which is why whiskies that price out drinkers – such as Karuizawa Japanese whisky, a collector's favourite – experience more market volatility. "One person's investment today is going to be someone else's drink tomorrow."

Simpson warns there is potential for a significant correction in the market for single malt Scotch, which has yet to experience a



"What (I) did was commoditise single-malt Scotch whisky and prove beyond doubt whether whisky can go up in value."



full financial cycle, but adds that depleted stock due to poor planning by the industry will ensure prices remain resilient in the medium term.

He believes his brokering business, which introduces buyers and sellers for deals starting at £10,000 and has an average transaction value of £132,000, will insulate Rare Whisky 101 from changes to discretionary spending habits.

Spiros Malandrakis, an alcohol analyst at Euromonitor International, says the market for rare whisky is likely to benefit in the short term from an "existential crisis" in luxury goods.

He says more brands are presenting themselves as "premium", so driving investors towards artisanal and rarer products. "(Whisky) will become more about underscoring craftsmanship," he says.

Rare Whisky 101, which began as a spreadsheet on Simpson's computer, is not alone in trying to open up the whisky trade. In September, an online trading platform, WhiskyInvestDirect, opened for business. This lets investors buy and sell units of whisky while it matures in the barrel.

For the market as a whole much will depend on the changing landscape in emerging markets such as India and Japan. Contrary to popular perception, Simpson says "China is almost irrelevant" to the whisky market. "Their interest tends to be in grape rather than grain."

Simpson and Robertson now plan to revamp their website ahead of what they hope will be new investment.

"I established the business in the heat of a financial meltdown," Simpson says. "I'm addicted to it."





CLASSIC TREASURES

Sincere Fine Watches celebrates the best of the best
with *Robb Report Malaysia* and Breguet's timepieces.

By KENNETH TAN

1

Photos BONNIE YAP



1) Breguet's Classique 5277 is a rendition of craftsmanship in 18-carat rose gold and equipped with a silicon balance spring. 2) Michael von Schlippe, president of *Robb Report Malaysia*, addresses the audience. 3) From left: Billy Ooi, Datuk (Dr) Kelvin Tan, Damien Ooi and John Teo. 4) From left: Michael von Schlippe, A Ravi and James Won. 5) Breguet's Reine de Naples in 18-carat gold and hand-engraved on a rose engine. 6) Fabien Levrier, Breguet's South-east Asia vice president.

Highlights included Hora Mundi with its instant-jump time-zone display and Crazy Flower Haute Joaillerie which was a shimmering vision of diamonds.

Guests of Sincere Fine Watches and *Robb Report Malaysia* were recently feted at Kuala Lumpur's latest culinary hotspot. Enfin by James Won became the setting for a multi-million ringgit array of Breguet timepieces. Highlights included Hora Mundi with its instant-jump time-zone display and Crazy Flower Haute Joaillerie which was a shimmering vision of diamonds.

Guests were entertained by the smooth vocals of Dasha Logan and her band. Flutes of Krug Grand Cuvee and snifters of Hennessy XO were complemented by an assortment of exquisite canapes. Later that evening, a round of Cohibas, Trinidads and Partagas added an aromatic polish to the night, getting guests in the perfect mood to celebrate the 2015 festive season and year to come. 

SNOW ANGEL

Do more than ski with the ski concierge at The Little Nell.

By HO YUN KUAN

Step out of your door into already-warmed boots, and have a cuppa with freshly baked pastries accompanied by the view of stark white peaks and perfect powder underfoot. There should be no other way to start a day of skiing.

The ski concierge at Aspen's The Little Nell will put together an experience that starts right and ends perfectly. Think beyond plain old skiing – opt to wake up early for First Tracks, and speed down pristine powder that still bears fresh corduroy marks from the daily slope grooming, or stay late for an exclusive

sunset ride in a snowcat to witness the mountain being groomed at the end of the day. For the hours in between, there's Click-in with Chris, a multi-day ski and snowboard programme led by skiing legend Chris Davenport that gives participants access to a Nastar race, breakfast at The Little Nell's private dining room, as well as the hotel's health centre and outdoor hot tub.

To get gear that befits this five-star experience, request to see Jerry Scheinbaum, who claims to be the finest tuner in Aspen's Roaring Fork Valley and was the resort's original ski concierge. www.thelittlenell.com



Illustration OLEG BORODIN

OFF THE BLOCK

We keep you up to date with the hottest lots under the hammer.

By REN VETIM

Platinum and Diamond Necklace by Van Cleef & Arpels

Auctioned by Sotheby's in New York
for US\$4.2 million (\$6 million).

Formerly from the collection of Egyptian queen Nazli Fouad, this magnificent platinum and diamond necklace holds considerable historic value. Crafted in France in 1939, it takes the form of a graduated line necklace with an internal circumference measuring 35.56cm, supporting a flexible bib in the form of a sunburst. At its centre lies an articulated round diamond weighing approximately six carats, surrounded by 134 carats of 118 larger round diamonds. The necklace is accented with 27 carats of smaller round diamonds and 50 carats of baguette diamonds. www.sothebys.com



Omega Speedmaster 50 by Christie's in New York for US\$245,000.

Setting a world auction record for an Omega Speedmaster, this timepiece was owned by American astronaut Ron Evans. It was worn on board the Apollo 17 Command Module America during a heat flow experiment. Measuring 42mm in diameter, the stainless steel chronograph was manufactured and features a black bezel with a tachymeter scale calibrated to a 500 units. www.christies.com



Red Lacquer Namiki Fountain Pen Auctioned by Bonhams in London for £45,000 (\$94,000).

This rare A-grade Namiki vest pen, crafted in 1930, is considered one of the finest red lacquer Namikis ever created. Measuring 104mm, the pen features a 14-carat gold #2 heart-vent Pilot nib, a 14-carat rolled gold band, and a cap and barrel decorated with Japanese fan motifs and abundant mother-of-pearl raden. It bears the signature of Shogo Iijima – regarded as one of Namiki's most acclaimed artists and premiere artisans – making it an even more remarkable collector's item. www.bonhams.com





LOVE ON WHEELS

Rolls-Royce presents a bespoke birthday gift.

By KENNETH TAN



Photos LI/IMAGEROM



When a Malaysian entrepreneur decided to customise a 50th birthday gift for his wife, he flew into Rolls-Royce's Goodwood plant two years earlier to begin discussing the range of specifications he was after. From a coachline with a dragon – to reflect his wife's and twin children's Chinese zodiac sign – to a rear theatre configuration in the Ghost Series II, the entirety of the project became a labour of love for the client.

To be sure of the specially commissioned Sunrise colour, of which the nearest available reference was in Japan, Rolls-Royce decided to produce an exact replica of the hue on a plate and flew it into Kuala Lumpur. This gesture ensured that the client would be happy with the different gradations in the colour throughout different times of the day.

His family members' initials and names were embroidered into the centre and inner arm rest, with the latter housing a champagne chiller. Specifications also included personalised tread plates and a veneer of specially picked elm cluster, which fits in with the creme light and tan leather interior. To signify the golden anniversary of her birth, the husband selected a 24-carat gold-plated Spirit of Ecstasy. And as a most personal tribute to their cherished love, a dedication plaque in the glove box is inscribed with Proverbs 31:29, which reads, "many women do noble things, but you surpass them all". www.rolls-roycemotorcars.com



BRANCHING OUT

A feeling for nature is at the root of this expansive design.

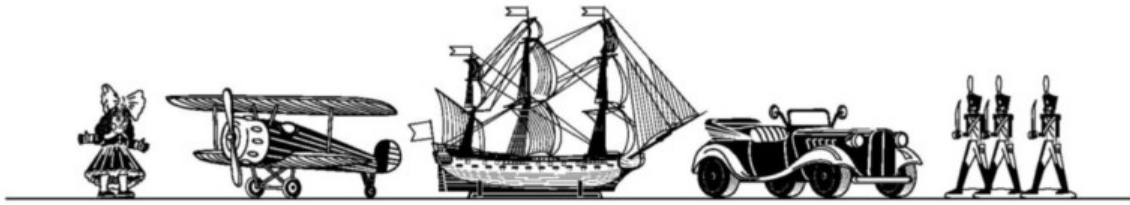
By CAROLYN MEERS





A visit to an antiques shop outside Bangkok led Stephen Termviriyakul to a faded Japanese painting depicting a cherry blossom festival, and at the painting's centre was a tree with wide-reaching branches. That mesmerising form planted the seed of inspiration for the Bonsai cabinet (US\$16,850, \$24,170). Termviriyakul's design, which is limited to just 26 examples, is nearly two metres long and shares attributes with other furniture from his Bangkok-based company, Muse Design. "Most of Muse's designs show the shape, colour and texture of natural things," he says. "We always try to bring nature into the client's life. Human beings, especially in today's busy world, love getting closer to nature."

Close inspection of the burnt-oak cabinet reveals the handiwork in the exterior's leaves and blossoms and in the interior's gnarled branches, some of which are shelves. A wax sculpture of the tree precedes a plaster mould that ultimately is cast in bronze. Inside, the cabinet glows with a paint made from powdered gold – a sheen that recalls the gilding on Buddha statues and Thai temples. "When you open the cabinet," Termviriyakul says, "you can feel a dramatic, warm gold colour come out." muse-th.com



“OUTSIDE OF A
DOG, A BOOK
IS MAN’S BEST
FRIEND. INSIDE
A DOG, IT’S TOO
DARK TO READ.”

Groucho Marx

PRETTY FETCHING

Jeff Koons Balloon Dog

By CAROLYN MEERS

Part of the proceeds from the sale of the 26.7cm-tall piece will benefit the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.



Jeff Koons's whimsical sculptures have appeared on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and in the halls at Versailles. Fans of the Pennsylvania-born artist's three-metre-tall *Balloon Dog (Yellow)*, which is in private hands, can now display a limited-edition version of that vibrantly

coloured stainless-steel artwork at home. Priced at US\$8,000 (\$11,000), each 26.7cm-tall, metallic-finished porcelain piece from the French company Bernardaud is signed by Koons and available exclusively through the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. moca.org



OUT OF THIS WORLD

Sennheiser Orpheus HE 1060 and HEV 1060

By MARCUS YEW

Orpheus, the father of song in Greek mythology, was said to charm even stones with his divine music. The Sennheiser HE 1060 and HEV 1060 headphones bear the same name, and they definitely live up to their moniker.

Groundbreaking in their legendary first iteration in 1991, the latest Orpheus headphones are once again set to revolutionise the industry. The original 0.9-micron gold diaphragms have been upgraded to 2.4-micron platinum diaphragms, which translate to better sound quality.

Response time and clarity get

a boost with in-built amplifiers, set in Carrara marble for reduced distortion.

The result is perfect balance, vivid spatiality and precise fidelity – Orpheus plays you music the way it was recorded, not the way it thinks you might like it to. And you feel like you're right there, lost in the many layers of music.

With a frequency response that extends far from what humans can perceive, and an astronomical €50,000 (\$77,000) price tag, the Orpheus is in its best sense, out of this world. No surprises there.

en-de.sennheiser.com

The new Orpheus models come with gold-vaporised ceramic transducers that help deliver outstanding electrical and acoustical performance.

A FINE TIME

Omega Ladymatic

By RENYI LIM



If love's endurance is registered by the passing of each second, minute and hour, give her the finest instrument by which she can chart the length of your journey together.

Omega's Ladymatic – a classic timepiece that's retained its captivating style since its release in 1955 – has the Omega Co-Axial calibre 8520 as its beating heart.

The Ladymatic's seductive curves are crafted from 18-carat Sedna gold and stainless

steel. They're made all the more sensational by a white mother-of-pearl dial, a snow-set diamond bezel, 11 indexes set with diamonds, and an extra-brilliant Omega-cut diamond placed within the polished crown.

Match it with your very own Globemaster, or if you want to spoil her further, Omega's Ladymatic fine jewellery collection will complement her new timepiece, with graceful, wave-inspired pieces in white gold and red gold. www.omegawatches.com

FORCE OF NATURE

Highland Park 50 Year Old

By RENYI LIM

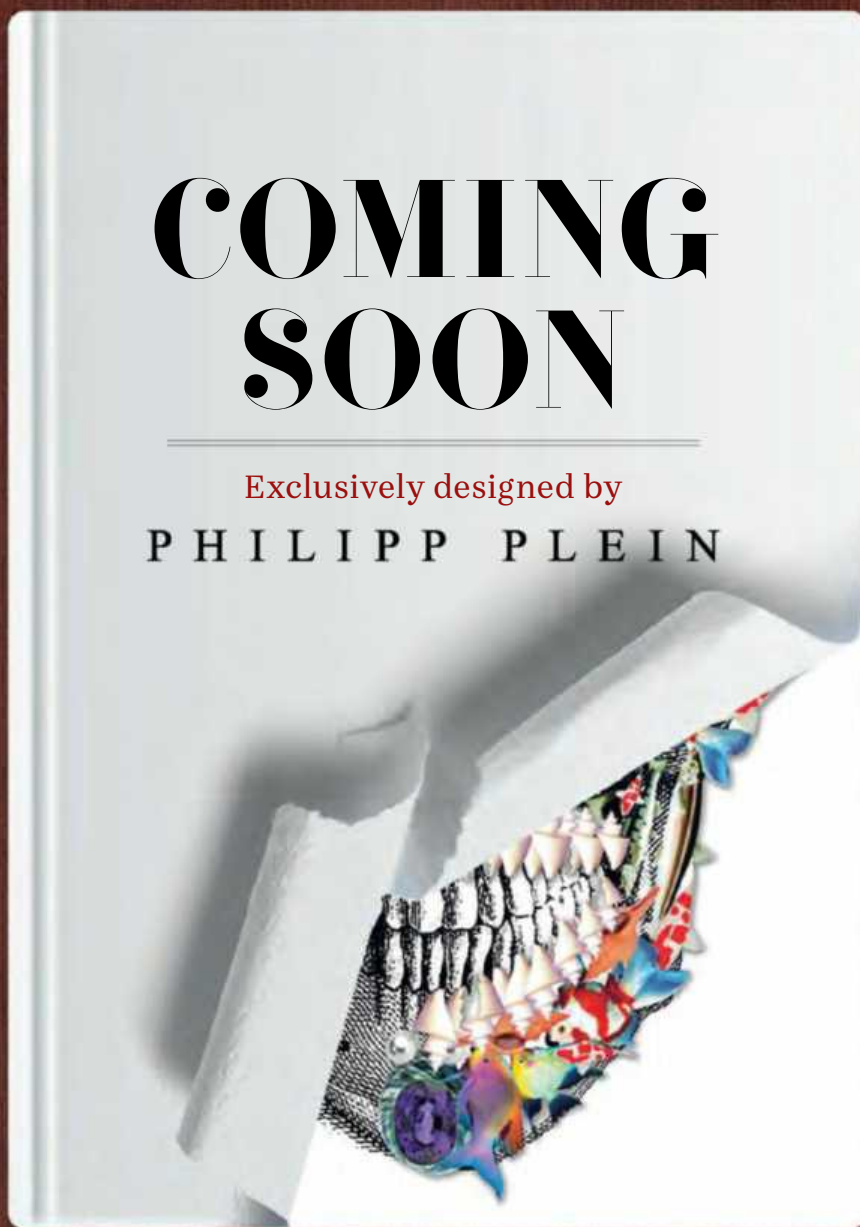


From the windswept, salt-kissed isles of Orkney comes the Highland Park 50 Year Old (RM114,000, \$37,000). This complex, vibrant whisky was vatted from five casks distilled in 1960, making it the distillery's oldest and most prestigious release. With just 275 bottles available, only a handful of Scotch connoisseurs will have the chance to delight in its rich, spicy notes of dusty wood, old tobacco pouch, muscovado sugar and camphor, with a long and delicately smoky finish. A handcrafted sterling silver cage created by Scottish jewellery designer, Maeve Gillies, embraces the bottle, paying tribute to Orkney's maritime elements, its wild weather and the ever-steady progression of time.

www.highlandpark.co.uk 

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This and facing pages: a lounge and library further enrich the unique luxury watchmaking experience designed for true connoisseurs.

HOMeward BOUND

Roger Dubuis moves closer to its roots with a new flagship location in Geneva.



By HO YUN KUAN

It's still the same city, but it means so much more – Roger Dubuis has relocated its flagship in Rue du Rhone in Geneva to Place de la Fusterie, bringing the store closer to the heart and soul of the brand. It was in the vicinity of this square where founder Roger Dubuis began his career as a watchmaker and restorer. The new address is also just 15 minutes from the brand's workshop, making it easy to facilitate any customer requests to visit.

Clad in the brand's colours of bronze, black and red, the 157sqm boutique is spread out over two storeys and has an interior featuring design elements taken from the four Roger Dubuis

worlds and collections – Excalibur, Hommage Velvet, Pulsion and La Monegasque.

Entering the boutique, one is first greeted by the Rarities section, where customers view and ponder over personalisation options to create completely unique timepieces. In line with the opening of this store, Roger Dubuis has launched a unique restoration project it calls Millesime. It aims to create one unique piece every year inspired by vintage movements from its archives to showcase the finesse of Roger Dubuis' restoration work. **Roger Dubuis** Place de la Fusterie, 5, 1204 Geneva Tel: +41 22 321 28 28 www.rogerdubuis.com 



COMEBACK KID

Audemars Piguet unveils its new and improved flagship store.

By HO YUN KUAN

Audemars Piguet brings Switzerland's Vallee de Joux to Singapore with the reopening of its flagship boutique at Liat Towers. Behind the lofty three-storey facade, the 196sqm boutique is outfitted in a blend of wood and metal finishes complete with feature walls adorned with landscape photographs of the scenic village of Le Brassus, the birthplace of the brand.

The store debuts a concept design that attempts to capture 140 years of brand history.



The boutique is divided into two sections: The Manufacture and The House. The former is where the product displays and a watchmaker's corner are located, showcasing the best work and heritage of Audemars Piguet.

In the latter is an inviting bar and lounge well-stocked with a selection of teas, coffees and liquor, where guests may relax while they ponder over their purchases.

Audemars Piguet #01-03 Liat Towers Tel: +65 6836 4918 www.audemarspiguet.com

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Photo CONDE NAST ARCHIVE/CORBIS



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The Club in Singapore offers a new sense of belonging.

By BEN CHIN

The Club's recent revamp has rendered it virtually unrecognisable from its former self, and that's a good thing. Gone are the stark white interiors, replaced with luxe eclectic furnishings by design firm Hassell. The boutique hotel combines three buildings into one, offering the designers an offbeat canvas to reconfigure the 20 guest rooms and five f&b venues into a cohesive whole.

Guests are first greeted by Mr and Mrs

Maxwell's, the ground-level lounge imbued with warmth and personality with a curated collection of artwork and custom furniture. Hassell's interiors stylist, John Marangos, explains: "The Club was to feel more like a residence rather than a hotel. As with our approach to the interior design, storytelling played an integral part in the curation of objects and art. I wanted to present a personal collection so as to provide insight into the inspirations,



The Club is a new f&b-led lifestyle and hospitality concept housed in a 19th-century colonial building. Pictured here are the whisky bar called B28 and the bathroom in one of the suites.

influences and obsessions of a well-travelled and educated couple.”

Besides increasing the proportions of the guest rooms, each of them are furnished uniquely with a combination of luxury and bespoke pieces. The hotel's corridors have also been transformed to allow more natural light in; and converted into a long winding art gallery where an Alexander Calder sculpture sits alongside specially commissioned pieces by

Singaporean artists. Guests after a good drink won't even need to leave the hotel. The relaxed Champagne Courtyard is an elegant al fresco enclave, surrounded by the building's original timber shutters. B28, the charmingly old-fashioned whisky bar, has also been refurbished.

However, if it's a view you're after, Singapore's first Peruvian rooftop bar Tiger's Milk is the place to be. **The Club** 28 Ann Siang Road Tel: +65 6808 2188 theclub.com.sg

PROPERTIES & GOURMET

**“OH, MY DEAR,
HOW TOO
MARVELLOUS!
I’VE LONGED
ALL MY LIFE
TO EAT A
FLAMINGO.”**

Compton Mackenzie



Photo ALFRED EISENSTAEDT/THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES



From their pool deck, the Kandarakis family enjoy panoramic views of Sentosa Cove's waterways.



MANOR OF MEANS

Homeowners Michael and Kara Kandarakis sought the help of celebrated architect Richard Landry to design their dream mansion.

By AARON DE SILVA

Pulling up to the Kandarakis Residence in Sentosa Cove, Singapore, a visitor is immediately struck by the property's generous frontage. Most plots in this gated millionaire's playground are narrow and deep. But it was precisely this quirk that attracted the Kandarakis to purchase this

patch of luxury real estate: they wanted to erect a modern mansion with a grand facade.

That, they got, by no less than Canadian-born, US-based architect Richard Landry, whom *The New York Times* dubbed The King of the Megamansion in 2015. "He only designs five homes a year, for clients like Steve Wynn, Gisele Bundchen

and Mark Wahlberg," explains Kara Kandarakis, a Japanese-American film producer and distributor. "When we approached him, it was around the time that the US economy was slowing down, so he agreed to put us down for the one slot he had left."

The Kandarakis would be Landry's first Singapore-based

clients. According to a press statement, their brief was for a unique modern home that stood out from the modern homes they were seeing throughout Asia.

They wanted a home with clean lines and a contemporary indoor-outdoor openness that took advantage of the tropical climate. They also desired a kid-friendly home with access to the water. The

couple have two daughters, aged four and 10.

Taking inspiration from the 1,115sqm trapezoid-shaped plot, Landry incorporated trapezoidal shapes onto the facade, plans and elevations. On a smaller scale, these geometric motifs were echoed in the floor tiles and wall panelling. To serve as a counterpoint, soft organic curves were applied liberally across

the interiors and landscaping. Most of the built-in furniture, for instance, sport voluptuous, curvilinear shapes. Such features lend insight into the extraordinary level of detail that went into the planning of this four-storey abode.

Upon entering the house, the visitor encounters a dramatic curved metal staircase that rises to a bridge, separating the second-level

Most of the built-in furniture,
for instance, sport voluptuous,
curvilinear shapes.



family room from the ground-level public spaces. A double volume atrium, animated by a cascading chandelier, opens out onto views of the 20m lap pool, patio area and waterway beyond. To the left of this central axis lies a sprawling, sunken living room and bar counter; to the right, a spacious dining area set up for 10 guests, as well as a dry and wet kitchen tucked away in the corner. A guest bedroom, neatly tucked away behind the staircase, and a powder room, also artfully concealed on the opposite side of the stairwell, complete this level.

Upstairs, the master suite – comprising the master room, ensuite bathroom and a walk-in wardrobe divided into his-and-hers sections – is housed in one wing, while the kids' bedrooms and gym is housed in another. The family room, at the intersection of the two wings, provides a convenient meeting point for the entire household. The space is anchored by a custom-built banquette by top Italian marque Giorgetti. Most of the home's loose furnishings

**A double volume atrium
is animated by a
cascading chandelier.**

A bar and wine cellar, adjacent to the basement home theatre, provides refreshments, akin to a Hollywood premiere.

The master and mistress of the house awake to a picture-postcard view of the surroundings.





The owners wanted a home with clean lines
and a contemporary indoor-outdoor openness
that took advantage of the tropical climate.



are also by Giorgetti. In fact, the company's president/owner, Carlo Giorgetti, was called upon to liaise with Landry on the furniture selection as well as the interior colour palette, which consists mainly of neutral shades.

A second staircase adjacent to the family room connects to an office on the third storey. This is the domain of Michael Kandarakis, a Greek national who runs a private equity firm. As he works from home from time to time, Landry thoughtfully designed a lift that gives clients, business partners and other guests direct access to this space from the ground level. And should Michael need to take a break,

he can step out onto an adjoining open-air roof deck that overlooks Sentosa Golf Club's Tanjong Course.

The basement holds a surprise. Here in this darkened, subterranean enclave is a sophisticated lounge with a bar and walk-in wine cellar (capacity: 1,000 bottles) that wouldn't look out of place in any top-flight nightlife establishment.

**Soft organic
curves were applied
liberally across
the interiors
and landscaping.**

Next to this, an audiophile theatre lined with acoustic panels designed by New York's Rives Audio allows Michael to indulge in his passion for music, while Kara and the kids binge on TV series and films that have been downloaded onto their 100TB server.

These days, the family spend most of their time in London, a convenient base for Michael to serve his European clients and for Kara to promote her films at European film festivals. They're renting a townhouse in Belgravia, though they plan to buy a property in the area soon. And when they do, they will turn to Landry once again to work his magic. •

Upon entering the house, the visitor encounters a dramatic curved metal staircase.

The main staircase connects the basement, living areas and bedrooms. A separate staircase leads to the office.



RESPECTING THE PAST

Architectural practice Michaelis Boyd has opened a studio in Singapore to take advantage of the region's rapidly evolving urban redevelopment.

By AARON DE SILVA

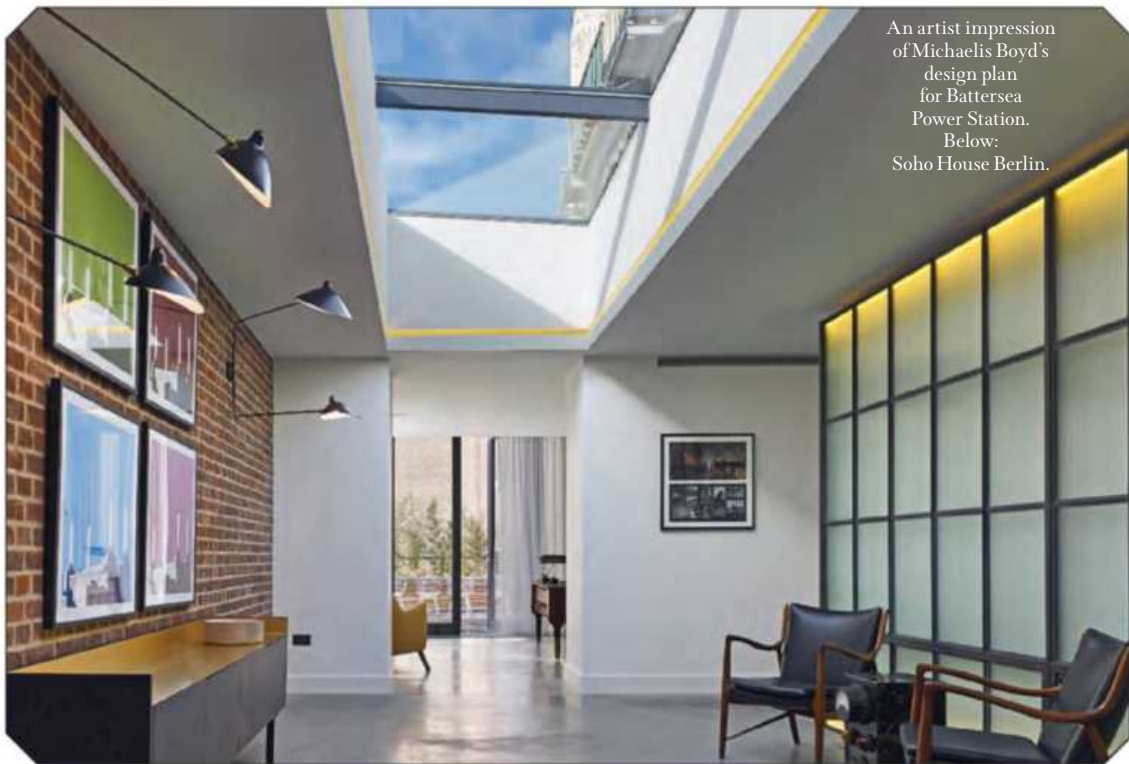
Michaelis Boyd's refurbishment of this 60-room, Grade 2-listed country house in Oxfordshire included the addition of a pool, pool house and extensive landscaping.



Michaelis Boyd has a knack for transforming historic buildings into contemporary spaces. Take Battersea Power Station, for example. In phase two of the £8 billion (\$16.73 billion) project in London's South West, the design-led architectural practice – co-founded by Alex Michaelis and

Tim Boyd in 1995 – will convert the decommissioned coal-fired power station into 254 luxury apartments.

Instead of proposing plans for sleek dwellings that could be anywhere in the world, the pair opted to incorporate the building's inherent industrial characteristics. “Our vision was for something that didn't look like a normal high-



An artist impression of Michaelis Boyd's design plan for Battersea Power Station. Below: Soho House Berlin.

“Our vision was for something that didn’t look like a normal high-end development, that was a little bit more raw.”

end development, that was a little bit more raw,” Michaelis told *The Telegraph* in a 2014 interview. “As far as possible, we will work with materials that are already there,” Boyd added. “That will mean making maximum use of the brickwork and referencing the remaining metalwork.”

The 254 apartments – of which more than 100 configurations are available, ranging from studios to five-bedroom penthouses – will occupy the eastern and western flanks of the building.

Stylistically, residents can expect a raw, industrial aesthetic: think

exposed brickwork, custom-made tiles, freestanding copper baths and unfinished brass fittings. These will acquire a patina over time, adding to the lived-in feel of the spaces.

The firm is no stranger to this sort of refurbishment. One of its



earlier projects, Soho House Berlin, involved the transformation of a former department store in the central Mitte district into an uber-hip boutique hotel with 65 rooms and 20 serviced apartments. To retain the eight-storey, Grade II listed building’s rich history, the architects stripped it to its bare bones and used the exposed raw brick finishes and concrete textures as part of the hotel’s design.

Maintaining an honest approach to architecture – in other words, not dressing up spaces with fussy, decorative details – is very much part of the Michaelis Boyd

ethos. So too is the emphasis on sustainable, environmentally sound architectural solutions, a result, perhaps, of Michaelis's upbringing. His father, the renowned architect and engineer Dominic Michaelis, was a solar energy pioneer, and continues to be active in the field of renewable energy. After completing his studies at the prestigious Architectural Association and Oxford Polytechnic, the younger Michaelis joined Solar Energy Departments in London and then Gilles Bouchez + Associates in Paris before meeting Boyd at John Miller and Partners.

It was there that the pair realised a shared interest in sustainable architecture, and decided to form their own company. Among their

more famous eco-friendly projects is British prime minister David Cameron's home in Notting Hill, which they retrofitted with a wind turbine, photovoltaic panels, a solar thermal system and 'grey water' tank to recycle bath and shower water.

Spurred by the pace of development in the luxury hospitality sector in Asia, the firm set up a studio in Singapore during the World Architecture Festival last November. The office is helmed by senior architect Misae Furugori Gonzalez, who will drive its expansion into South East Asia and beyond. Judging by the company's impressive resume, it won't be long before things start getting busy.

michaelisboyd.com 

Among their more famous eco-friendly projects is British prime minister David Cameron's home in Notting Hill.

The Oxfordshire home marries traditional construction features with elements of new architectural detailing.

A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

Australia's dining revolution finds its culinary epicentre in Sydney.

Prepping coals at
Firedoor, Australia's
first solely fire-
powered restaurant.

Inset:
Rangers Valley Trip
Tip Pastrami is
available at Aria.



It's fine dining without the frippery, a 'stripped down' approach one frequently encounters in Sydney's new wave of restaurants.



By SHAMILEE VELLU

If you're curious where the next big dining trend is headed, follow the trail of ants. It should lead to Rene Redzepi, famed forager and widely recognised as the world's most influential chef. Redzepi has prepared the insect at Noma (*noma.dk*), his iconic Copenhagen restaurant and at his pop-up restaurant last January in Tokyo, where he served live, wriggling specimens on raw jumbo prawns. He now has his sights trained on the green tree ants from Australia's Arnhem Land, which he plans to dish out at his 10-week pop-up now open in Sydney.

According to Redzepi, the ants offer an explosion of "kaffir lime, lemon grass and a touch of coriander," a taste sensation that only a select group of fleet-fingered diners

will get to experience. (Bookings for the 26 January to 2 April residency sold out in less than four minutes.)

Noma's move is the latest jewel in the crown for Tourism Australia's Restaurant Australia campaign, which has enjoyed monumental success in its efforts to brand the country as a foodie destination. Since its launch in May 2014, expenditure on food and wine in Australia has grown by 16.6 per cent to A\$697 million (\$698 million). Over 800,000 international tourists visited an Australian winery in the last two years, a year-on-year increase of 17 per cent. International chefs have also heeded the campaign's siren call: Heston Blumenthal's celebrated Fat Duck just concluded its six-month stint in Melbourne, while much-feted local chef David Thompson



has just opened Long Chim (longchimperth.com) in Perth's Como the Treasury after many years away.

Blank Slate

The boom in gourmet-minded travellers has dovetailed with a new breed of innovative chefs who are forging their own brand of Australian cuisine. They certainly had their work cut out for them: key of which was the proliferation of some of the worst kinds of stereotypes about the continent's cuisine – including overly gamey meats like kangaroo, crocodile and emu, or deep-fried Bloomin Onions at Outback Steakhouse. Michelin has yet to publish an Australian edition – the closest thing is the Australian *Good Food & Travel Guide* (www.agfsg.com.au), which awards Chef Hats for culinary excellence. There was also a stigma that most food trends had long passed their sell-by date by the time they completed their

Carriageworks Farmers Market features seasonal produce from farmers and artisans from across New South Wales; Lennox Hastie (inset) spent five years working with Victor Arguinoniz, pushing the limits of what could be cooked over an open flame.



lengthy journey to the antipodes.

"There's a misconception that Australia is a bit behind the times, that we're still serving food from old-school England here," says Mat Lindsay, who helms Ester (www.ester-restaurant.com.au), one of Sydney's most acclaimed new-wave restaurants. As visitors have discovered, nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, it's precisely a lack of established culinary traditions that have led to a sort of gastronomic blank slate, one which allows chefs to blaze their own paths completely unhindered by conventions or expectation.

"In the UK we've had so many years under the shackles of French cuisine where there was a perceived right or wrong way to do things," Blumenthal told *Good Food*. "You don't have that in Australia. Customers were coming to the restaurant in the ideal state of mind to rub their hands together in excitement and it really

The waitlist at Firedoor, set in Sydney's affluent Surry Hills, is as long as its extensive wood menu.

energised my guys.”

Matt Dillow (www.mattsproduce.com.au), who owns a small dining empire in Sydney's storied Hunter Valley, says Australian cuisine offers a bit of everything.

“We've taken a big leap in the last five to 10 years – chefs are really pushing themselves to do different things. We've taken bits and pieces from all over the world and put it on a plate,” he says. “I guess you can call it ‘fusion’, but it's about doing it the right way. If not fusion can become confusion.”

Juicy, succulent and tender morsels of pippies are treated simply with garlic and chilli at Firedoor.

Homegrown Advantage

If Sydney is experiencing an explosion of dining innovation, the bounty of local produce is the rocket fuel propelling it. “We utilise what's in our backyard”, says Dillow. “We've great quality produce here – like white Pyrenees lamb, fantastic line-caught fish. In the Hunter Valley alone, there're fantastic cheeses and beef. Lots of restaurants are into growing their own produce now – it's the freshest you can get.” Regional





Troy Rhoades-Brown, the owner and chef behind Hunter Valley restaurant Muse, is redefining perceptions of regional food with his produce-driven cuisine.



“In the Hunter Valley alone, there’re fantastic cheeses and beef.”

produce also provides a creative canvas for chef Troy Rhoades-Brown of Muse, situated in the Hunter’s award-winning Hungerford Hill Winery. Here, Rhoades-Brown focuses on refined, yet simple platings of the best of the season, be it black figs, local game, or beetroots. His Muse Coconut, in particular, never fails to draw rave reviews, with its trompe-l’oeil husk of dark chocolate filled with a cloud of light-as-air coconut mousse.

Nowhere in Sydney is this abundance more evident, however, than at Carriageworks Farmer’s Market (carriageworks.com.au), a weekly Saturday smorgasbord of locally grown foods which you can browse over a freshly brewed cup of locally roasted beans, craggy wedges of berry-topped pavlovas, or a steamed pork bun from local dining doyenne Kylie Kwong, who still mans her bushflower-bedecked stall here. Meanwhile, the world’s most glamorous butchery, Victor Churchill (www.victorchurchill.com),

Pair Muse’s coconut dessert (above left) with the 2014 Briar Ridge Late Harvest Gewurztraminer for the ultimate taste sensation; Mat Lindsay (inset) of Ester uses a wood-fired oven to create dishes such as this cauliflower with almond and mint (above right).

com), in the wealthy suburb of Woollahra, continues to ply its superlative Wagyu and charcuterie from within its sleek brass and vitrine-filled space, which to all appearances looks like it sells Prada rather than pork.

Even bush foods, which have been slow to catch on, have been popping up on plates in Sydney’s best new restaurants. Among these are warrigal greens (a native spinach), finger limes (with its caviar-like fruit sacs), aniseed myrtle (with its rich aniseed aroma), and even those zesty green tree ants of which Redzeppi is so enamoured.

Australia’s unique flora plays a pivotal role in one new player’s food. The waitlist at Firedoor (www.firedoor.com.au), set in Sydney’s affluent Surry Hills, is as long as its extensive wood menu, a unique concept in which different woods (mostly local ones like ironbark and pear) are used to bring out the best in different ingredients. Chef Lennox Hastie says, through a





spokesperson, that the restaurant sources its wood from a guy in the nearby Blue Mountains “who just goes around collecting them.” “Our food is about the delicacy of the wood,” he says. “Apple wood tends to turn white hot quickly, which is good for crustaceans and delicate fish. Mallee root gives a rich, earthy tone.”

Half the restaurant is dedicated to the kitchen, which is dominated by a giant wood burner. This burns at a hellish inferno of 1,000 degrees, effortlessly reducing logs into coals in time for dinner service. Despite its name, Firedoor is a smoke-free affair, relying instead on its deliciously fire-cooked steak, seafood and even desserts to turn up the heat.

Reinterpreting Local

“I guess eating local is trendy, which is weird because it’s the oldest form of cooking,” says Lindsay, whose restaurant, Ester, has become known for extremely nuanced dishes that belie the menu’s truncated descriptions.

Firedoor’s live marron served with blood lime and native herbs.

Inset: Mike McEneaney, creative director at Carriageworks Farmers Market.

Facing page: (from left) Bon Klaus Kuil, Matt Langdon, Neil Perry and Ryan Gavin of Qantas Rockpool Sommeliers.



“You can call my cuisine Modern Australian – inspired by different cultures with touches of Asian freshness,” says the former waiter, who trained under Australian icons like Neil Perry. Ester’s food has a primal, salt-of-the-earth feel about it. A wood-roasted whole snapper is dressed in a light onion sauce and garnished with crisp saltbush (a local briny-flavoured shrub). Raw, glistening slices of local kingfish come simply accompanied by a dab of charcoal nori sauce and grilled mandarin orange. Leave room for dessert – the Three Milks, with its trifecta of dulce de leche of goat milk, frothed sheep’s milk yoghurt and delicate pannacotta with a crunchy dappling of rosemary-olive oil biscuit – will singlehandedly guarantee a return visit.

Lindsay’s pared-down culinary approach is reflected in his restaurant, a garage conversion in Chippendale, a small inner-city suburb with artistic ambitions. At Ester,



there are no flowers on the table, and no starched tablecloths. In short, it's fine dining without the frippery, a 'stripped down' approach one frequently encounters in Sydney's new wave of restaurants.

It's the case even at Aria (www.ariarestaurant.com), Matt Moran's celebrated occasion restaurant at Sydney Harbour, or Peter Gilmore's Bennelong (www.bennelong.com.au), which recently launched at Sydney Opera House.

Sydney dining's smart yet casual vibe jives especially well with imports like Momofuku Seiobo (seiobo.momofuku.com), David Chang's first overseas outpost. Located at The Star, the man behind the pass (as of last May) is imposing Barbados native Paul Carmichael, previously executive chef at Chang's Ma Peche in New York.

Well-versed in his employer's

TALENT POOL

Multi-award-winning chef Neil Perry's relationship with Qantas spans 19 years, with his Rockpool Consulting team designing seasonal inflight and lounge menus for First and Business Class travellers. His latest innovation is Qantas Rockpool Sommeliers, a crack squad of 16 experienced sommeliers and mixologists who will blind taste, review and select from 1,200 Australian wines and champagnes each year and provide tasting notes for the International First and Domestic Business cabins. They will also provide recommendations for wine in the lounges and for the first time, Rockpool mixologists will create monthly cocktails. A recent debut was the Modern Australian Gin, a limited-edition libation crafted exclusively for Qantas with Four Pillars Gin, a small craft distillery in Melbourne.

irreverent approach to small plates, Carmichael delivers Chang favourites such as a salty fried bishop's nose in the same delicious breath as he does simply but deliciously prepared Moreton Bay Bugs, Queensland giant grouper and smoked dry-aged duck with local wattle seed. It's fun food that just happens to taste fantastic as well.

None of this is lost on Redzepli. He recently praised several Sydney establishments, particularly Ester, which he admired for its seasonal, "spot-on" cooking. Australian cuisine offers unbounded culinary possibilities, Redzepli recently told *Conde Nast Traveller*. "They're searching for something in Australia. They're not food preservationists – they're on the verge of creating something mind-bogglingly new."

Michelin, take note. 

Chef Taku Ashino
differentiates
himself from his
peers by cooking
his sushi rice in an
iron kettle using
water from Mt Fuji
and curing his fish.



BEST AGED

Fresh isn't always best. Connoisseurs are seeking out the unusual flavour profiles offered by carefully aged foods, which now extend beyond meat and wine.

By SYLVIA YL TAN

Good flavour is worth the wait. But exquisite flavour can come as the result of finely honed experience and judicious handling, rendering perfect ingredients even better through time.

A CUT ABOVE

Chef Taku Ashino may be the most well-known chef specialising in aged sushi in Singapore, a trend

that's of no surprise to Japanese aficionados. For the inscrutable and single-minded sushi master who helms his eponymous 10-seater sushi bar, the emphasis is not on aging per se, but the "best timing to eat", as he articulates. This demanding style of sushi requires meticulous care of fish and technique, where the chef has to determine the peak flavour for each ingredient before he serves it. "Most customers misunderstand what I aim for," says the soft-spoken chef. "My ideal is



About 90 per cent of Acquerello carnaroli rice is aged in temperature-controlled silos for a year.

for the rice and fish to 'melt' down together, not separately. In ageing, the sinews become soft and the taste intensifies with the effect of inosinic acids (just like in cheese).” In addition, he adds precise cuts to each sliver of fish to further soften it. This achieves a symphonic crescendo of rice and fish sliding smoothly down your throat, compared to fresh fish that has only texture but not the complexity of umami that comes from careful layaway.

However, just as in ageing meat, longer is not always better – the key is intuition and experience. Ashino serves salmon roe, shellfish and clams fresh, while each fish is judged on its individual character. Botan shrimp may rest for three days to achieve a slightly sticky, gelatinous texture, while most fishes are kept up to only 14 days, as the colour becomes too dark even if the taste is still evolving. From his experience ageing *kinmedai* (golden eye snapper) till 40 days, Ashino proclaimed the fish past its peak taste as the balance of fatness and sweetness became “no good”. Put yourself under his spell over the lunch or dinner menu, as he hypnotically prepares each morsel, uttering simply “fatty tuna, nine days” or “black throat sea perch, five days” as he hands you each delicate creation – which you receive with your hands. chijmes.com.sg/ashino



THE SLOW LARDER

“Time plays a big role in taste, texture and colour,” asserts

Stephanie Duriez, of online gourmet store Secrets Fine Food. The industry veteran trails her artisan producers in France and Italy, learning first-hand about their painstaking techniques and processes. The store is a home chef’s pantry of covetable ingredients including nine-year-old Italian Acquerello carnaroli rice and French Sturia vintage caviar, both increasingly finding favour with chefs worldwide.

About 90 per cent of Acquerello carnaroli rice is aged in temperature-controlled silos for a year and is recommended by the likes of Thomas Keller and Heston Blumenthal, while the remaining 10 per cent ages for up to nine years. Ageing renders starch, proteins and vitamins less water-soluble, improving the consistency of the grains and enabling them to absorb more cooking liquid. When cooked, the grains become bigger, firmer, do not stick together – and taste even better.

Possibly Bordeaux’s second most well-

Stephanie Duriez set up her website so that others can also savour the same passion she has for fine food and the masters that create it.



**“People are rediscovering things,” says Patruno,
“and fermentation is a form of ageing.”**

known export, Sturia caviar from farmed Siberian sturgeons is aged from just 10 days to over eight months. The roe is typically salted and aged for one to four weeks or even longer before they are tinned as fresh caviar has virtually no flavour. The ageing process helps develop a fuller flavour, a longer finish and more tender roe with less ‘pop’.

secretsfinefood.com

Jean-Philippe Patruno specialises in robustly flavoured alternative cut and offal delicacies, as well as succulent classic-cut specialities with a commitment to whole animal usage.

ageing cocktails – negroni and absinthe – in his two countertop five-litre barrels. By the time you read this, he would have filled the ex-negroni cask with his own blend of chilli paste, which he intends to age for four to six weeks. In London, he experimented with garum, an ancient Greek fermented fish sauce. “People are rediscovering things,” says Patruno, “and fermentation is a form of ageing.” His blend of chipotle, dried chilli, chilli padi, garlic, tomato, onion and bay leaf will be joined by aromatics such as celery, salt, fennel and cumin, with sugar and vinegar to ferment as the paste absorbs its woodsy caramelised and sweet negroni notes from the used barrel. The results, if good, will complement his other experiments with slow-cooking various offal and off-cuts. As always, only time will tell on the final results. *dehesa.com.sg*

INTO THE BARREL

Barrel-ageing has been one of the hottest trends of the past two years, with producers experimenting not just with liquids such as beer and cocktails, but also condiments such as honey, mustard, vinegar and hot sauces. When chef Jean-Phillipe Patruno launched nose-to-tail diner Dehesa in mid-December, he started with



FLAVOURFUL FORECASTS

Six of Singapore's top chefs weigh in on what diners can expect to see on their plates this year.

By ALYWIN CHEW

Memory (facing page) – comprising foie gras jelly with olive oil, fleur de sel and black truffle coulis – was created by Andre Chiang (this page) during his early days as a chef.



ANDRE CHIANG

RESTAURANT ANDRE

Fermentation is something that everyone has been exploring for many years and I think it could achieve a breakthrough, either this year or in the near future.

“The second trend I predict is the rise of the tasting menu. I know it’s been around for a long time, but I think it’s set to become even more popular because it’s economical and it allows chefs to achieve perfection with their creations.



“Another trend I foresee happening is chefs doing both cooking and serving. There are several reasons behind this. Chefs love interacting with guests. Guests want to get up close to chefs who have become celebrities. Doing so makes service a lot more intimate and personal.

“I believe all these trends will be seen worldwide as the food scene in Asia is just as vibrant as in any other region in the world.” restaurantandre.com

IVAN BREHM

BACCHANALIA

I believe we will see a greater number of small bakeries and small chef-owned restaurants sprouting. We will also see more establishments make their own products such as beer, cheese and tofu.

“I think 2016 will see chefs using more tropical or local ingredients and preparation methods in their dishes. Bacchanalia’s coconut risotto, which is inspired by a Thai Tom Kha, is a good example of this. It is made using local ingredients such as coconut and galangal, and incorporates techniques such as ageing, pickling and fermenting. I’m hopeful that, with Michelin coming to Singapore, there will also be more focus on the incredibly rich, diverse and delicious local offerings in the form of mod-Sin.” www.bacchanalia.asia



WILLIN LOW

WILD ROCKET

“There will be a greater emphasis on the sourcing and quality of ingredients. food created for the stomach – think comfort food – instead of those created for the mind.

A dish such as a locally sourced pork belly braised in dark soy sauce that is made by an artisanal brewery, and served with organic multigrain rice, encapsulates this trend.

“I hope there will be a move away from molecular gastronomy and the over-plating of dishes. I believe food should still be beautifully plated but with fewer bells and whistles, and I hope to see more



“New exciting concepts will continue to sprout from young chefs abroad looking to come to Asia, as well as from those within our own countries. Whether it is in Bangkok, Manila, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, more and more local chefs will be coming up with novel ideas of serving modern food that incorporates the flavours and ingredients of their homeland.” www.wildrocket.com.sg

KENJIRO HASHIDA

HASHIDA SUSHI

“Consumers will be more particular with the types of oils used in their food. The upcoming trend will likely be for hemp seed, avocado and argan oils.

“For Japanese cuisine, there will be a greater use of vegetables to reflect the importance of good health. Last year, I went to a radish farm in Ishikawa prefecture where the people primarily use traditional methods of farming. The agricultural plots are located very near the sea and the water they use is drawn from deep underground – very pristine and pure. Hashida Sushi will be using such kinds of vegetables in our cuisine and we will share with our customers how these produce have been grown with care and dedication.”

hashida.com.sg



JULIEN ROYER

ODETTE

“I think we will see a growing preference for dining experiences that highlight the simple, genuine pleasure of eating. There will be less of a focus on the stories behind the dishes and the ‘creation’ process. Instead, I believe there will be more emphasis on the pure enjoyment of a wonderful meal without having to put too much thought into it.

“A dish that would describe this would be one that is comforting and warm. It would be something like a slowly roasted scallop finished in a pan with foamy butter, thyme and a piece of crushed garlic. Simple and delicious.

This will likely be the trend in Singapore too, with there being a larger focus on quality dining experiences that highlight honest cooking.”

www.odetterestaurant.com



Chef Kirk Westaway (inset) preparing his Japanese Saba Mackerel with Avocado and Organic Radish dish (main image).

KIRK WESTAWAY

JAAN

I foresee an increase in innovative creations. We have noticed that consumer preferences are leaning towards dishes that contain a variety of elements, such as a well-balanced mix of carbohydrates, protein and greens, rather than dishes that focus on a sole main ingredient.

“Greater emphasis on organic, produce-driven cuisine is also

anticipated, and a need to explore healthier ways of cooking. Consumers are becoming more health-conscious and mindful of their diet. Take my Japanese saba mackerel with avocado and organic radish for example. Every element in the dish is cooked simply and healthily, allowing the natural characteristics and qualities of the ingredients to be showcased.

“Health-consciousness has also led diners to be more interested in knowing what goes into a dish and where the produce comes from, prompting restaurants to be more conscious of ingredient choices.”

www.jaan.com.sg



THE MASTER OF MISE EN SCENE

The bespoke spaces created by Robert Cheng of Brewin Design Office offer sensual and timeless living with their rich details, layered narratives and well-composed sceneries.

By LUO JINGMEI

The heart of this Ardmore penthouse is an open living room, with a loose layout of furniture pieces that offers a variety of seating arrangements, in full view of art bathed in natural light.



When one thinks of Fat Cow in Singapore's Camden Medical Centre, it is not just the exquisite cuisine that comes to mind. The finely crafted interior, with a cloud of interlocking timber cubes that floats above the central space and cascades down the walls, also leaves a deep impression.

This is the work of Brewin Design Office, helmed by architect and interior designer Robert Cheng. His approach is characterised by an artisanal nature, rooted in

Robert Cheng's approach is characterised
by an artisanal nature.



experimental fabrication techniques and refined detailing. An underlying conceptual rigour also provides an originality and gravitas to the multi-textured palette, put together with a well-curated eye. This methodology stems from his education in the art-focused Rhode Island School of Design, as well as the mentorship of his architecture-trained father, and architects Calvin Tsao of Tsao & McKown and Jean Nouvel, with whom Cheng had worked under.

For Cheng, there is no boundary between architecture, interior design and product design. Like a renaissance artist, all three disciplines inform one other and much effort is put into the design of big and small elements to conceive a seamless whole. This is most

Cleverly placed seating nooks provide ample opportunities for guests to appreciate the owner's art collection and the expansive view.

Inset:
an antique screen from the Edo period hangs above the bed.

An underlying conceptual rigour provides an originality and gravitas to the multi-textured palette.



evident in several residential interiors he has completed in Singapore.

For instance, in an apartment in Hana Residence, Cheng drew from the building's contemporised Japanese influences of screening and symmetry. There is a bespoke coffee table of stacked solid Iranian red travertine slabs that brings to mind traditional Japanese structures, as well as a custom-designed shelf with delicate proportions and lines subtly referencing Kyoto Imperial Palace.

In another example, the home of an art collector in Ardmore Residence, Cheng created a tableau inspired by American artist Donald Judd. In the living space, a Mies van der Rohe Barcelona Daybed is juxtaposed with vibrant paintings by Florian Maier-Aichen and Oscar Murillo against the backdrop of soft silk carpet underfoot and a ceiling of smoky grey metal sheets.

From above:
Cheng in
his studio;
a detail of the
matrix of timber
cubes in varying
sizes at Fat Cow.



In these bespoke environments, Cheng weaves together narratives about history, material, form and space. "To me, an environment that is bespoke is eclectic, in the pairing of old with new, or affordable and expensive ... it is moulding the space in the manner of a set designer, by combining various pieces to create a setting that is unique to the space, and in certain cases, resembles a style that the designer exudes naturally,"

Cheng describes.

For sure, the worlds he creates are luxurious. But it is a luxury that goes beyond the visual and the tactile, such as expensive gold or exotic marbles. Cheng's definition of luxury holds deeper meaning. "It is when a mindset has been customised to one's own philosophy. This idea of luxury is very romantic and is characterised by a quiet subtlety," he reflects.

www.brewindesignoffice.com

Pu-erh tea is harvested from aged tea bushes and fermented to enhance its flavour.

A FINE BREW

No longer relegated to the end of a meal, tea now shares the spotlight with wine in the hands of exacting sommeliers.

By KENNY LEONG

Photo KEN STRAITON/CORBIS



“Conceptually, there are many similarities between tea and wine, such as appellations, styles, fermentation and vintages.”

It is lunch on a Monday at Beni (www.beni-sg.com) and sommelier Hiromi Muraoka brings out a dark tinted wine bottle. She sets a wine glass on the dining table, carefully removes the glass stopper from the bottle, and gently pours a serving.

The cool, bright amber liquor offers floral and fruity aromas supported by notes of brown sugar, leading to a delicate honeyed palate that hints at peach and apricot.

"It's Royal Darjeeling Rajah grand from Royal Blue Tea," Muraoka says, "grown and harvested on Makaibari tea estates."

Over at Odette (www.odetterestaurant.com) – arguably the hottest new French restaurant in town – sommelier Vincent Tan, clad in a sharp grey suit, presides over a set of tea-brewing equipment. He pours hot water into a pot of 2013 Bingdao raw pu-erh, lets it steep for several seconds, decants the contents into a separate teapot, and serves it to his guests.

At dusk, a similar scenario plays out at Wolfgang Puck's Cut (www.marinabaysands.com). Standing over a gueridon used for tableside service, general manager Paul Joseph patiently brews a pot of 2006 Menghai raw pu-erh in a Yixing clay teapot, distributing the tea into demitasse cups before serving it to the diners.

It is perhaps unusual to see sommeliers in fine dining restaurants fussing over teacups alongside wine glasses, but it is a development that probably has been a long time coming. As Singapore's dining landscape continues



Head chef Kenji Yamanaka's speciality lies in the preparation of meat dishes – in particular, Wagyu.
Inset:
Royal Blue Tea.



**Chefs too readily recognise that
tea can greatly elevate a meal.**

to evolve and mature, these hallowed dining establishments are starting to pay closer attention to serving good tea.

No longer a careless afterthought or token drink to accompany sweet confections, it now shares the spotlight with wine.

Indeed, tea, with all its complexity, is a lot like wine, Tan says. "Conceptually, there are many similarities between them, such as appellations, styles, fermentation, vintages and so on. It makes our job easier when we explain tea using concepts borrowed from wine." The decision to serve fine tea at Odette, he explains, is driven by the conviction that it constitutes an integral element of the perfect and complete dining experience.

"A lot of people don't seem to recognise that tea in fine dining holds a great deal of importance – you can't have an excellent meal only to conclude with mediocre tea. You spend so much time, energy and resources on creating the perfect meal, why end it on such a disappointing note?"

Chefs too readily recognise that tea can greatly elevate a meal. "When I was running Sma Blomman in Tokyo before moving to Singapore, I was already serving Royal Blue Tea to my guests," recalls Beni's head chef Kenji Yamanaka. "The tea company's founder Keiko Yoshimoto and I share similar passions and vision to provide diners who can't drink wine or alcohol something that would afford the same level of experience and enjoyment as wine. So when we started Beni, I took Royal Blue Tea with me." The teas are chosen to match Yamanaka's dishes, and guests are surprised when they pick up significant differences in them. "They are able to appreciate the nuances of each tea and



Vincent Tan of Odette.
Below: Esteemed hospitality designer Tony Chi crafted Cut's interior with a modern aesthetic.

how they are paired to the dishes, just like in wine pairing," says Muraoka.

But when tea does not come prepared and bottled, sourcing for consistently high-quality offerings becomes more labour-intensive and less clear-cut.

To overcome this problem, Tan works with tea specialists to develop and tailor his tea programme.

"It's important to find people that we trust, who share our passion and also possess the relevant technical knowledge," he says. "We assess teas through a purely sensorial perspective so our judgement is



Here in the formal settings of a fine dining restaurant, tea finds a new lease of life.



Wolfgang Puck is no stranger to fine tea, and is retailer of a range of organic blends.

not clouded by fanciful storytelling or preconceptions.”

At Cut, the culinary and beverage teams come together to explore various tea options to determine those that best match the restaurant’s style of cuisine.

“Most of our dishes stay the same except for seasonal specialties, so we have a collection of tea that matches the dishes,” Joseph says. “We usually recommend diners to have tea at the end of a meal, but occasionally we have guests who ask us about tea pairings and we’ll give our recommendations. For example, you can have a 1998

A NICE CUPPA

Seasoned collectors readily fork out handsome figures for well-aged teas from reliable sources. If you are looking to dip your toe in the water or are trying to build up a collection, it is advisable to obtain your tea from reputable merchants.

EAGLE TEA MERCHANT

A specialist in high-end collectible teas ranging from Wuyi yancha to pu-erh, Eagle Tea Merchant provides restaurants and private collectors with teas noted for their rarity, individuality, prestige and value. www.eagleteamerchant.com

PEK SIN CHOON

Established in 1925, Pek Sin Choon is one of Singapore’s oldest tea merchants. It carries an array of Chinese teas, mostly of the oolong and pu-erh varieties. Some of the teas are charcoal-roasted in accordance with traditional methods of production. peksinchoon.com

PHOENIX HILL TEA MERCHANT

This merchant specialises in teas sourced from Fenghuang mountain in Shantou, Guangdong, where it owns a tea plantation that spans over 40 hectares. www.phoenixhill.com.sg



The menu at Beni includes fruit-based dishes such as this Yamanashi Pear dessert.

raw pu-erh from the Menghai Tea Factory alongside a steak with a marbling score of nine and it works incredibly well.”

Here in the formal settings of a fine dining restaurant, a world apart from the boisterous confines of a traditional Chinese teahouse, tea finds a new lease of life, where equal emphasis is placed on its aesthetical and sensorial appreciation.

“Like great wine, it’s becoming more of a status drink,” Joseph offers. “It’s not easy to find good pu-erh, and when it’s available at a place where people least expect it, they will go for it.”

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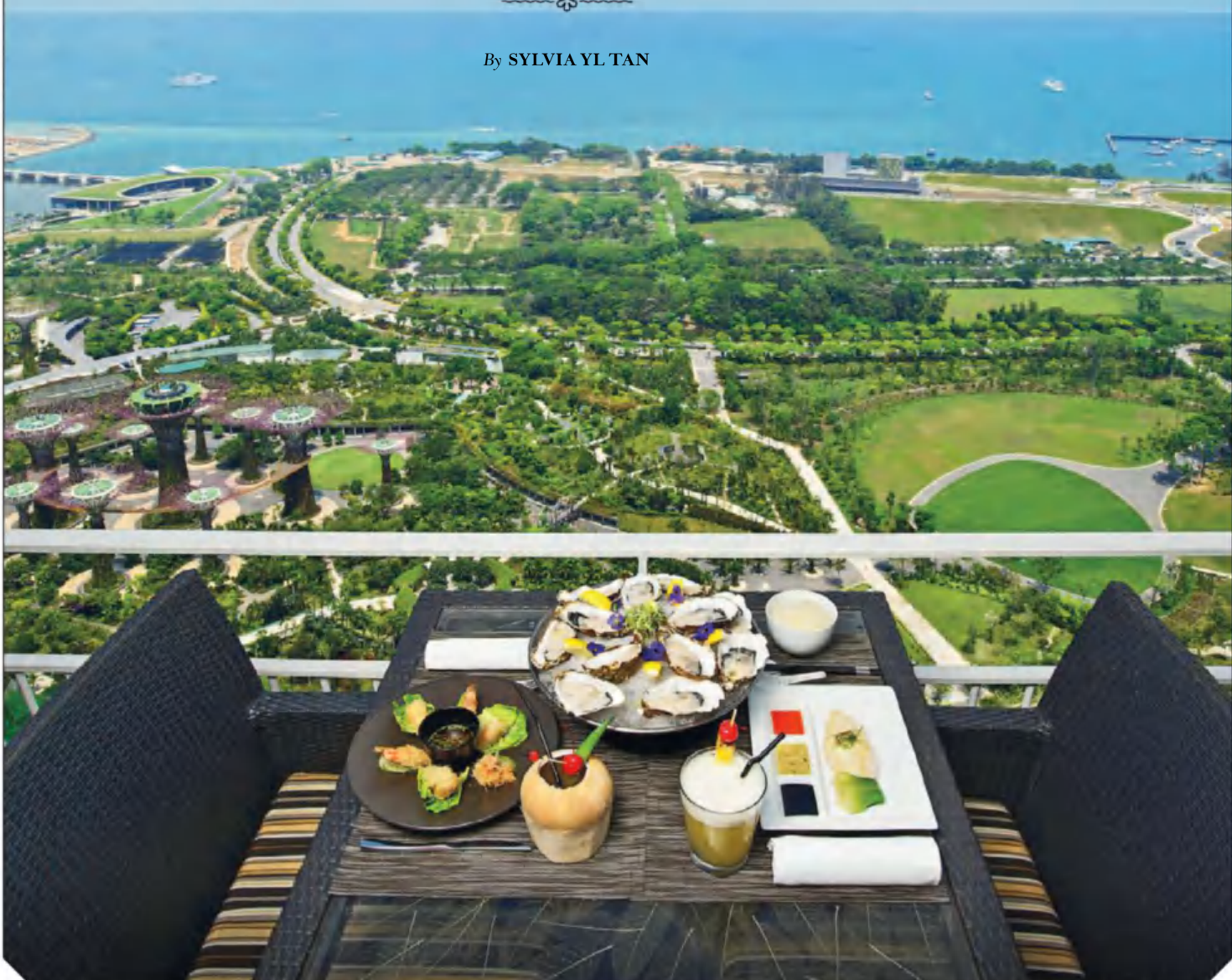
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SINGAPORE

MICHELIN ROLLS INTO SINGAPORE

The city's eateries are more than ready to take on the famed little red guide and its rating system.

By SYLVIA YL TAN





Singapore will welcome its own Michelin guide in the second half of 2016, the third Asian country to do so after Japan (2008) and China (Hong Kong and Macau, 2009). While the guide's contents are as mysterious as the anonymous inspectors for now, what is known is that international inspectors (and possibly some local ones) have been and are eating their way through Singapore's top restaurants.

Michelin Guides international director, Michael Ellis, has also hinted that Singapore's street and hawker food will have a "major role".

We put on our food critic caps to gaze into the culinary crystal ball for a few predictions.

Executive chef Roberto Galetti serves authentic Italian cuisine at Garibaldi. Facing page: Sky on 57 offers fine dining with a view from the 57th floor of Marina Bay Sands.



A STAR IS BORN

Japan has the most three-starred Michelin restaurants in the world, with about 30. France has 26. Quoted in *Vanity Fair's* November 2015 issue, Ellis notes: "There's a great symbiosis between France and Japan. Both countries have fantastic ingredients. Both countries have an almost religious appreciation for produce and the seasons' ingredients. Both have tremendous technique."

Based on that clue, Shinji by Kanesaka and Hashida Sushi – helmed by their namesakes and much revered by local diners – may be in the running for at least two stars each.

Given that the "personality of the chef's cooking" is a criterion, we also predict that chef-owner and independent restaurants will be on

Sky on 57, under the Les Amis alumnus and celebrity chef Justin Quek, delivers fusion cuisine to well-heeled punters.



The Unlisted Collection's collaboration with Jason Atherton also offers Esquina and Pollen as possible one-star contenders.

the frontlines of inspection. These include Restaurant Andre, Iggy's, Gunther's, Garibaldi and Saint Pierre. With a few months comfortably entrenched, 2015's only fine-dining entrant Odette would also be in the running, despite not having a track record yet.

An outlier with a local celebrity chef is Wild Rocket, which does deliver when it comes to value for money. While we have a soft spot for Singapore's first home-grown French fine dining establishment Les Amis, its previous carousel of chefs might be problematic. Needless to say, these restaurants capably fulfil the criteria of product quality as well as preparation and flavours.

Chef Carlos Montobbio presides over Esquina's buzzy open kitchen – arguably one of the busiest in Singapore.



On the awards track as well are internationally renowned names that have put Singapore on the fine-dining map in the past five years, though the chefs in question are not based here. They are, however, in good hands with specially picked right-hand men at the helm. These include DB Bistro, Osteria Mozza, Waku Ghin, Spago and Cut at Marina Bay Sands, and Joel Robuchon and L'Atelier by Joel Robuchon at Resorts World Sentosa. The Unlisted Collection's collaboration with Jason Atherton also offers Esquina and Pollen as possible one-star contenders.

That leaves a few more luxury restaurants to step into the fray: Jaan, despite losing its best-known chef to

Odette, still trades in some of the most memorable contemporary cuisine in town from its sky-high perch, while the similarly glittering Sky on 57, under the Les Amis alumnus and celebrity chef Justin Quek, delivers fusion cuisine to well-heeled punters.

But let's not discount the best Chinese and Indian restaurants Singapore has to offer: Tong Le, Summer Pavilion, Hua Ting and Rang Mahal are flying the flag high for their superb, authentic renditions of centuries-old gastronomy.

UNDER THE BIB

Bib Gourmand, which was introduced in 1997 to recognise "good cooking at moderate prices", may prevail in the Singapore edition. In 2015, Tokyo proffered 343 Bibs, which were priced under ¥5,000 (\$58). If we were to see a similar category under \$50 in Singapore, who would get the nod? Peranakan fare, driven by House of Peranakan, Violet Oon's Kitchen and Peranakan? Or would it include clever and thriving f&b group concepts from PS Cafe,



Below left: Jason Atherton's modern European dishes at Pollen include Aged Wagyu Shoulder Tender. Marinated Botan Shrimp with Sea Urchin and Caviar (below right) is a signature dish at Waku Ghin by Tetsuya Wakuda (inset).

Imperial Treasure, Crystal Jade, Paradise Group and Tung Lok? A casual survey may also throw up stray names such as Long Chim, serving blazing hot Thai street fare conceptualised by celebrity chef David Thompson, Teppei Syokudo and its much-loved *chirashi* bowls, or Keisuke Ramen – regularly touted as Singapore's best bowl.

TO LAY YOUR HEAD

Most punters forget that hotels are also rated, based primarily on comfort. To that, we could also add poise, design and history. It's a cinch to say who should be included: The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia; Shangri-La Hotel and Four Seasons have long been preferred and well-known addresses. Newer entrants such as Fullerton Bay Hotel and South Beach may get a nod given their enthusiastic reception. Colonial greats including Sofitel Sentosa, Capella and the grand dame Raffles cannot be left out. Should a boutique design hotel be included, we've got our money on New Majestic Hotel, despite its slight datedness.

www.guide.michelin.sg





MAPPING NEW TERRITORIES

To Australian designer Marc Newson, every project is an experiment in blurring boundaries.

By JOSH SIMS

Marc Newson created this small jet-powered airplane and called it Kelvin40 in honour of the 19th-century physicist and mathematician, Lord Kelvin.

Photo AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Newson, 52, is arguably the most important industrial designer of his generation.

“My job is to find solutions, so I have to know the problems – so the more exposure to the problems out there the better my response will be,” says Marc Newson as he summarises his job. “Travel helps. Go to Japan, for instance, and see how they solve even mechanical problems. It’s very contrary to the way we in the West are brought up to tackle the same problems. But I work across such a broad space and so many different types of industries that it’s important to have a comprehensive understanding of contemporary culture.”

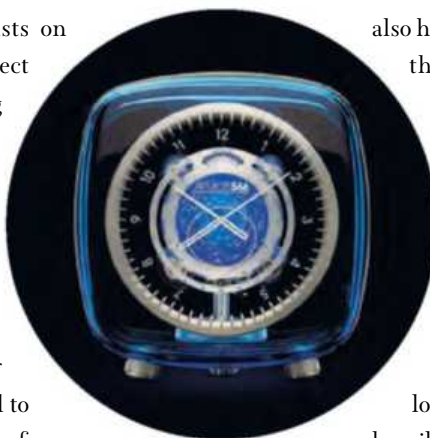
It is this, perhaps, that has allowed Newson, 52, not only to design pens, a bunk bed, jets and more for some of the world’s leading manufacturers of both high-end and quotidian products, but arguably to become the most important industrial designer of his generation. He has pieces in the permanent collections of over 20 museums around the world. His Lockheed Lounge – one of his first, self-built products, an aluminium-clad chaise lounge – sold last year for US\$3.7 million (\$5.2 million), becoming the most expensive piece sold at auction by a living designer to date.

Those who want to spend less might buy the Apple Watch he co-designed with Jony Ive or fly with Qantas – he’s the airline’s creative director.

He’s as busy as ever, which is saying

something for a man who insists on working hands-on with each project he takes on, rather than leaving the grunt work to an assistant. He's working on an office chair for Knoll, as well as many other projects that, inevitably, he can't talk about in detail. He's just designed a toaster and a new clothing collection for G-Star Raw. "The first problem I wanted to solve with that was the problem of my wardrobe," Newson jokes.

Indeed, he's so in demand that these days, he says: "I tend to pick projects based on what I want or need, on purely selfish terms. And I've always wanted a decent toaster. A wheelie bag too. I'm a consumer like everybody else. I acquire things and sometimes even in this world the choice is not available and that



From above:
the Atmos 566
timepiece for
Jaeger-LeCoultre;
Celebrating
Monogram
backpack for
Louis Vuitton.

also had good timing on his side: namely the fact that many manufacturers and consumers are only now, it seems, waking up to good design's potential.

"I've spoken with Jony (Ive) about this and we've both said we think a pent-up anger (at the design around me) is our greatest source of inspiration – looking around and saying 'that's horrible!'," he says. "And it's just as well I can. If everything around me was wonderful I'd be out of a job. That anger is inspirational because you understand that it doesn't cost any more energy to do something differently, better. Of course, everyone has different tastes and there are many solutions to a problem, so I'm only talking about when it's really bad. And design doesn't always result in quality.

Most of his designs reflect his distinctive, colourful, curvy, organic, materials-driven aesthetic.

irritates me. I try to look at things from the perspective of a consumer. What could they want? What do I want? And the list is getting smaller."

Most of his designs reflect his distinctive, colourful, curvy, organic, materials-driven aesthetic, in which everything and anything from shagreen to carbon fibre to polyethylene to steel might play on his palette. This is the man who made a shelf from a five-tonne block of marble and decked a speedboat in Micarta – made from layers of resin-laminated linen. But, he suggests, he has



After all, there's a lot of lip service paid to the idea that something is 'designed', especially when you're working within the imperative of the market, which is about offering choice for choice's sake."

A keen collector of vintage cars, he is particularly disappointed by car design today, blaming designers' over-dependence on computer software to find solutions rather than merely to enable ones they might have come up with out of their own experience and imagination. This is why Newson refers to himself as "very much a pen and paper man" – he carries a



big yellow, sketch-stuffed notebook with him wherever he goes.

“(Computers mean) a lot of industrial designers are really stylists, and increasingly so,” he says. “But the thing is that a computer is just a tool. What’s missing is the sense that the best ideas still come from deep within your head. If you’re always working with computers, your thinking is subject to that piece of software. I can look at a car and tell you what software it was designed with. I don’t think that’s a phase. I think my generation are last of a breed. We represent an old way of working that will be lost, at least until software becomes much more intuitive.”

Not that he is opposed to computers. Indeed, while the layers of management and marketing has made some of his work for corporate clients “like hitting your head against

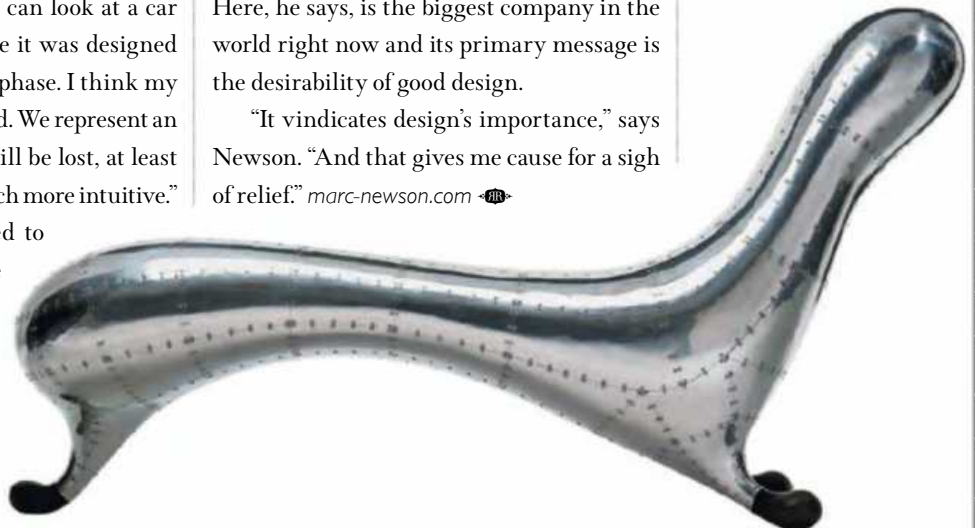
a brick wall”, he is very much of the school of thinking that it is his job alone to dictate the design solution.

However, working for Apple has given him new hope. Of course, Newson is not about to reveal what his next project for the tech giant will be, but he will say that his work for it – which takes up some 60 per cent of his time now – has been reassuring. Here, he says, is the biggest company in the world right now and its primary message is the desirability of good design.

“It vindicates design’s importance,” says Newson. “And that gives me cause for a sigh of relief.” marc-newson.com



From top:
Newson and his
Atmos timepieces;
Apple Watch;
Lockheed Lounge.



PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

South East Asia's first Krug Room and
Hennessy Salon is now open in Kuala Lumpur.



By KENNETH TAN

Krug Clos D'Ambonnay 2000 – a Pinot Noir vintage conceived by sunshine and storms within a single walled plot – expresses the richness of the year. This vintage may now be tasted at the newly opened restaurant Enfin by James Won, located at the heart of Malaysia's capital city.

For Won – the only Malaysian chef inducted into the global Krug Ambassade network thus far – the motivation behind this new place stems from his desire to elevate the

The 557sqm Enfin by James Won restaurant, which includes the impressive marble-topped Bar Enfin and al fresco dining area, fronts a 2,369sqm garden of trees and shrubs.

Malaysian dining experience in the way he knows best.

Two decades of globetrotting, including tutelage under France's culinary giants, made Won keenly aware of the culinary importance in celebrating national identity.

This understanding begins with an architectural and interior design language which employs grills – a classical Malaysian design element.

These grills are, in turn, highly polished, with a warm rose gold-tinted finish; to signal



The chef goes to the extreme lengths of curing duck egg yolk in miso and Hennessy XO cognac for seven days.

the modernisation of Malaysia's cuisine under Won. "I wanted to bring out the many flavour cues which contribute to Malaysia's unique palate," he says.

Among bespoke furniture, tableware and copper titanium alloyed light fittings, Won builds on a strong local base of taste profiles, from the local penchant for seafood to the Hakka-inspired dishes of his provenance. In his kitchen, these creations are brought to life by Won's French culinary training. He also instils a capricious twist to some of his dishes, such as in his tongue and cheek beef bourguignon combination.

Ingredients here are duly elevated from customary fare. Won sources his Wagyu from a small ranch along the Margaret River of Western Australia. The abalone is French, as is his poulet de Bresse, an appellation of origin-controlled chicken. That French connection also applies to the 15-year-old leaven – passed on to him by a French chef

Clockwise from top left: Parmesan Bavarian with 75-per-cent Tanzanian single-origin dark cocoa and Szechuan peppercorn sable; the restaurant's swish dining room; a multi-textured beef cheek a la bourguignon and seared tongue.

(he demurs on the restaurant's name). This leaven is used by the kitchen to produce its artisanal breads, baked daily to go with the freshly churned butter.

This notion of craftsmanship is de rigueur at the restaurant. The chef goes to the extreme lengths of curing duck egg yolk in miso and Hennessy XO cognac for seven days before it is made into an edible disc. To complement his line-up of remarkable ingredients – from the caviar and sea urchin to ethical Tanzanian cocoa beans (used in a 75-per-cent dark chocolate dessert) – Won also offers a gridiron of hand-made Italian and French cheeses.

All of this feasting naturally leads to the coup de grace, signalled by the array of Krug champagnes and Hennessy cognacs, stylishly offered in the two private dining rooms, Hennessy Salon and Krug Room. Hennessy Salon features a wall of rare releases such as Richard Hennessy and Paradis





Imperial, stretching back to vintages from the 1930s. Here, guests dine on gold-gilded Luzerne plateware, among opulent flower arrangements and flickering candles.

Meanwhile, every facet of the Krug Room is purposed towards heightening enjoyment

Chef James Won takes his cues from his French culinary training and Malaysian provenance.

of this rare and exclusive champagne. From service rituals to food pairing, Krug Room offers a glimpse into the champagne house's universe, one which previously existed at the world's only other Krug Room in Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong. 

TAKING CHANCES

Champagne's hip sibling is back
and it's bringing the party with it.

By CHARMIAN LEONG

The festive season is finally over, and with it goes the crates of empty bottles of special-occasion-bubbly. It's the same ritual every year, and while we will never deny the magnificence of a good champagne, we can all admit that it can get old.

Which is why you should start the new year off with a tippie that celebrates the lighthearted, playful side of winemaking. Yes, that side exists, and you can see it in wines made in the petillant-naturel style, a historically inspired method of winemaking that's making a comeback.

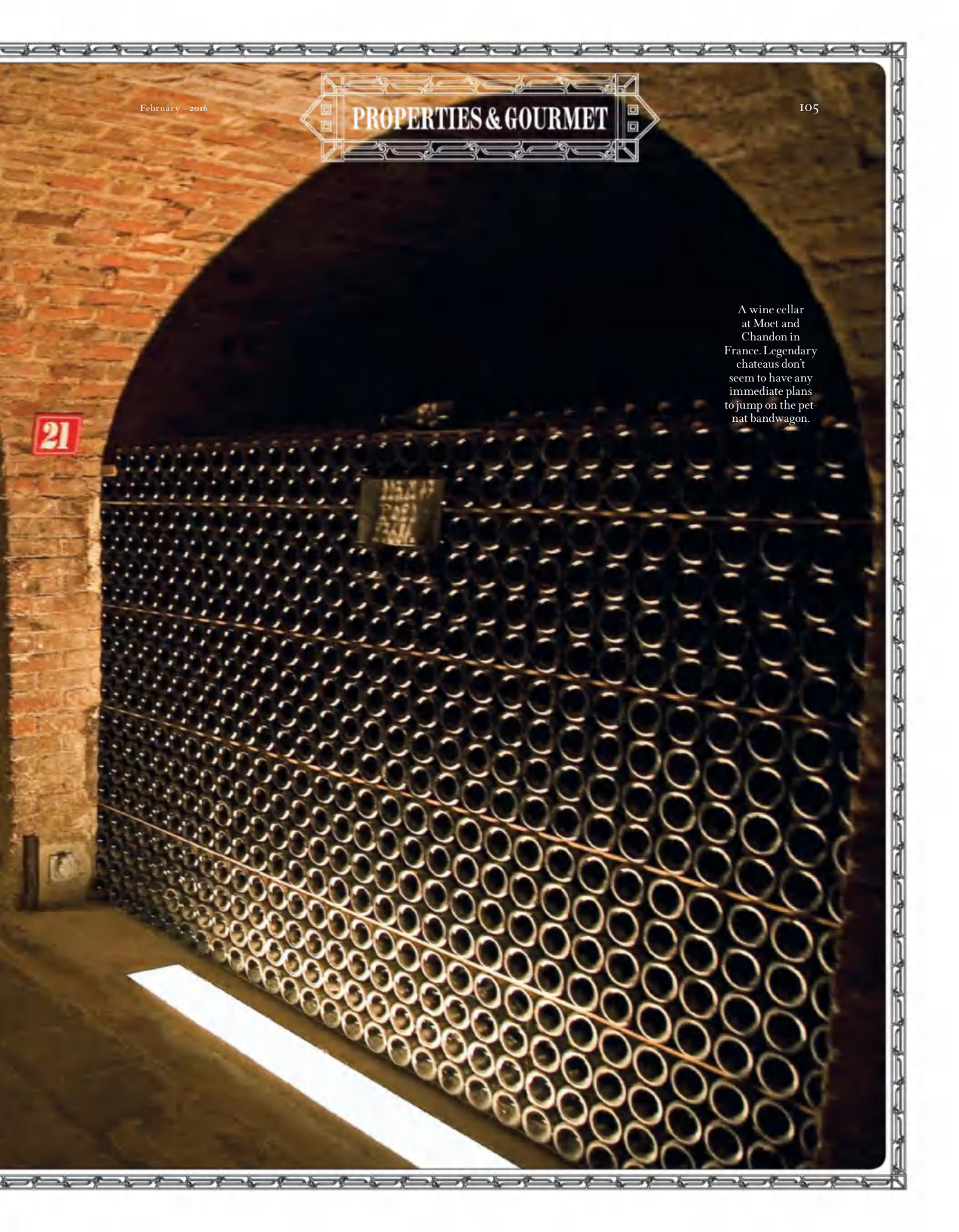
Known simply as pet-nat in the wine community, it is made using the methode ancestrale, which means the wine is bottled before the primary fermentation is finished. No additional yeasts or sugars are used, and the liquid is left to continue fermenting in the bottle. This is vastly different from the champenoise and charmat methods that include a secondary fermentation to give us champagne and prosecco respectively, and in fact predates both of these methods by centuries.

The result is a wine with a gentle fizz, (usually) dry character and comparatively

Photo DOUG BYRNES/CORBIS

A wine cellar
at Moët and
Chandon in
France. Legendary
chateaus don't
seem to have any
immediate plans
to jump on the pet-
nat bandwagon.

21



low alcohol percentage of about 10, making it an easy libation. These mild bubbles are the reason many pet-nat wines have crown caps instead of corks. It's the perfect beverage for our climate, and the fact that it can be made from a variety of grapes makes it an exceptionally versatile accompaniment to food.

But the main draw of pet-nat is its unpredictability.

Unlike most wines, where every step is carried out under controlled temperatures with precisely measured additives, pet-nat wines are mostly left up to chance. The winemaker is responsible for making the base wine, but once it's in the bottle, it's up to nature to decide how it will turn out.

Interestingly, while the method that pet-nat wines employ is ancient, its name is not. Radical winemakers like Thierry Puzelat (pictured above) and the late Christian Chaussard were experimenting with winemaking styles that involved as little intervention as possible during the peak of the natural wine movement in the 1990s. Chaussard once accidentally bottled a Vouvray (a wine region in the Loire Valley) that had some residual sugar in it and it ended up re-fermenting. Surprised at how much he liked the taste, he soon realised that winemakers in

the past had made wine this way intentionally, and he decided to follow suit. Together with his friend and colleague Puzelat, they coined the term *petillant-naturel*, where *petillant* means mildly, slowly effervescing. Today, the technique is becoming a phenomenon on its own.

But make no mistake, while pet-nat wines are enjoying a revival, it won't be replacing traditional sparkling – or even still – wines. “Serious wine drinkers probably won't be drinking this regularly,” opines Don Tay, owner of wine retailer Bacchus. “But I'll be happy to bring a good bottle to a party because it's something different and fun.”

Pet-nat wines may not cause a significant shift in drinking patterns among fans of the vine, but Tay is sure those new to the wine scene will be more open to it, citing the time when moscato was all the rage in newer markets like South Korea before eventually moving on to more serious styles.

Indeed, pet-nat wines may be closer in grouping to beer and cider, and should be similarly enjoyed without reservation or ceremony. As the trend has yet to take off in South East Asia, your best bet to get hold of these vibrant wines is through an online retailer or on your next vineyard tour. 



Thierry Puzelat photo BERTRAND CEICE

FOUR TO SCORE

Agnes & Rene Mos Moussamousettes Petilla

Rose: The wine from this Loin Valley winery is unfiltered with minimal sulphur used during bottling. This rose uses Grolleau Gris, Grolleau Noir and Gamay grapes.



Domaine Sebastian Brune Vouvray Le Naturel Methode Ancestrale NV: Sebastiar

Brunet inherited the Domaine Roche Fleurie vineyard in 2006 following the death of his father. Clay and silex soil give balanced acidity and minerality with fine and persistent bubbles.



2012 Eric Texier Rouletabulle:

Eric Texier was a nuclear physicist before he decided to dive into the world of the vine. His 2012 vintage uses mostly Chasselas (a white grape variety from Switzerland) and brings a tangy, if a little bittersweet, character to the wine.



Onward Wines 2014 Pei Nat Suisun Valley: Onwar Wines was founded b:

Canadian winemaker Faith Armstrong Foster. Her passion for growing grapes shows in her 2014 pet-nat, which boasts intense citrus notes with a hint of pear and vanilla.





Robb Report
ON SALE EARLY MARCH 2016

MEN'S FASHION & SIHH

Let your wardrobe and winder take centrestage with our curated picks of spring/summer 2016's sartorial must-haves and horology's latest marvels direct from Geneva's biggest watch fair.



Photo JESSICA HROMAS/GETTY IMAGES FOR IWC

REIGN AND SHINE

Kings Gate, in Victoria, Central London,
is the up-and-coming luxury address
for savvy homeowners.





style to provide what Eshelby describes as “a handsome building with understated grandeur”. Floor-to-ceiling windows add to the sense of light and space and natural finishes in warm colours – such as the oak-floored dining areas – blend with contemporary kitchens by Modulnova and Strato, which are equipped with Miele appliances. “From the moment you walk in, you can imagine entertaining in its wide, open spaces,” says Eshelby.

He explains that Land Securities is redeveloping some 279,000sqm of what were unremarkable 1960s buildings,

“From the moment you walk in, you can imagine entertaining in its wide, open spaces.”

London is one of the world's most exciting cities and thrives on a fusion of vibrant, diverse cultures. Unsurprisingly, the city is a magnet for property investors. But while the supply of property is increasing, there is little space for it in prime locations. A marked exception is a striking new residential development in the heart of Victoria, a sentry's shout away from Buckingham Palace. Built in the European tradition with a stone facade, Kings Gate by Land Securities is a 14-floor luxury building topped by four penthouses, each with a roof terrace of some nine square metres. Many of the 100 apartments have already been snapped up by buyers from South East Asia.

The two-storey penthouses offer spectacular views over the city, including the parks – and, yes, the palace – with interiors that provide exclusive, spacious accommodation. Tom Eshelby, Residential Director of Land Securities, says these are expected to be purchased by overseas buyers looking for a luxury home in London. The building combines Italian Renaissance influences with restrained British

This and facing pages: the living areas extend naturally outdoors, with most apartments enjoying private terrace space, while the rooftop gardens offer an exclusive retreat above the penthouse level.

transforming the area into a lively, luxurious mixed-use destination. In addition to the completed Kings Gate, a key part of this regeneration is the neighbouring Nova development, which Land Securities is due to unveil in September. It encompasses two commercial buildings and a 170-unit luxe development called The Nova Building. Nova features some of the most exclusive names in dining. “The new food scene is one of the best, with 18 food and beverage outlets in The Nova Building,” says Eshelby. Confirmed names include Will Ricker, Jason Atherton and Adam White. In addition, there is a Jamie Oliver's Italian restaurant at Kings Gate itself.

While demand for property in London cannot keep up with supply, Eshelby says Kings Gate still provides ultra luxury at an affordable price for the affluent. The penthouses are on sale for some £10 million (\$21 million) and are expected to increase in value by some 20 per cent in the next five or six years, he says. www.kingsgateswl.com, www.novaswl.com/thenovabuilding

BUSINESS CLASS

Berluti Moderniste leather carryall (www.berluti.com);
Turnbull & Asser umbrella (www.turnbullandasser.com);
Ascot Chang silk necktie (www.ascotchang.com);
Salvatore Ferragamo wool scarf and suede-and-lizard shoes (www.ferragamo.com);
Pal Zileri leather gloves with pony hair (www.palzileri.com).



February • 2016

STYLE

STYLE COUNSEL

Personality and polish derive as much from the details of a man's attire as from the clothing itself. Our experts offer their ideas for putting the best foot forward.

Photography **JEFF HARRIS** Styling **SHARON RYAN** Text **JUSTIN DOSS**



**URBAN ADVENTURER**

Worth & Worth by Orlando Palacios felted-beaver fedora (www.hatshop.com); Saint Crispin's wingtip Oxford leather-and-suede boots (at The Armoury, thearmoury.com); William Abraham baby-alpaca socks (williamabraham.com); Hermes lambskin gloves (www.hermes.com); The Elder Statesman buffalo-horn sunglasses (elder-statesman.com); Smythson lambskin passport case (www.smythson.com); Turnbull & Asser silk handkerchief (www.turnbullandasser.com).

February - 2016

113

LAID-BACK LUXE

Bally suede tote bag
(www.ballyofswitzerland.com);
Tod's City Gommino suede loafers
(www.tods.com);
Alexander Olch cotton-and-wool
scarf (www.olch.com);
Louis Vuitton sunglasses
(www.louisvuitton.com);
Ralph Lauren alligator card case
(www.ralphlauren.asia).





ARTFUL EXPRESSIONS

Santoni calfskin derby Moore shoes with satin laces (santonishoes.com); Hermes Serviette 57 calfskin bag (www.hermes.com); Jupe by Jackie silk pocket square with grass trim (at Gentry, www.gentrynyc.com); Camilla Dietz Bergeron vintage sterling-silver cuff links with enamel (www.cdbltd.com); William Abraham mulberry silk socks (williamabraham.com).

CREATURE COMFORTS

Bottega Veneta ostrich backpack
(www.bottegaveneta.com);
Berluti Alessio leather shoes and
leather wallet (www.berluti.com);
The Elder Statesman cashmere
hat (elder-statesman.com);
Salvatore Ferragamo suede belt
(www.ferragamo.com).



Sevan Bicakci took more than a year to craft Kraken (facing page), an intricately carved cuff-ring. Facing page, below: a pair of earrings featuring Bicakci's unique inverse layer painting technique.

THE GEM OF ISTANBUL

Turkish jeweller Sevan Bicakci is carving out his own world through art and faith.





By BEN CHIN



He may not be a household name, but to the discerning few in the know, Sevan Bicakci's high jewellery creations are almost priceless works of art. Take his anecdote of an unnamed American hip hop star, for example: the latter fell in love with the Turkish jeweller's iconic Kraken, a statement octopus cuff-ring comprising an oversized baroque pearl as the creature's head and tentacles set with brown diamonds that curl around the hand. He offered an undisclosed, but undoubtedly high sum for it but was refused by Bicakci. He doubled the offer, only to be turned down once again.

To the designer, the cuff deserves a place in his private collection as he will never be able to remake it due to the baroque pearl, which is unique in size and shape. This disinterest in commercial gain is refreshing. Bicakci's long-time creative director, Emre





The inverse intaglio carving technique he's revered for is a result of the experimental designer's penchant for boundary-pushing.

Dilaver, says: "He doesn't have an understanding of what borders mean, which can make life very difficult, but I respect his boldness. His indifference makes me admire him because the jewellery industry does too much market research. He works by instinct."

This instinct has led the award-winning jeweller to create his stunning signature micro-masterpieces, which cleverly depict universes contained within enormous gems. His studio near Istanbul's famous Grand Bazaar puts him a stone's throw away from the historic Hagia Sophia – the sixth-century Byzantine icon that inspired

Bicakci's emblematic dome-shaped rings. Turkish cultural icons often serve as inspiration for Bicakci, who was born in Istanbul in 1978. He had humble beginnings as a school dropout, choosing instead to become an apprentice under the

esteemed Armenian jeweller Hovsep Chatak, before starting his own workshop at the age of 18.

The accomplished artisan has received the prestigious Couture Design Awards six times and could even afford to take himself out of the running to make room for younger designers. The inverse intaglio carving technique he's revered for is a result of the experimental designer's penchant for boundary-pushing. Unsatisfied with the 'blankness' of gemstones, he decided to carve various renowned Turkish monuments into the centre of the stones. He refined the technique with each piece, carving deeper



Each experiment led to new discoveries, such as inverse layer painting.

A Padlock pendant by Bicakci.

Facing page, from top: the Butterfly Valley bracelet has butterflies fluttering realistically in the gem; Bicakci started his journey as a jeweller when he was only 12 years old.

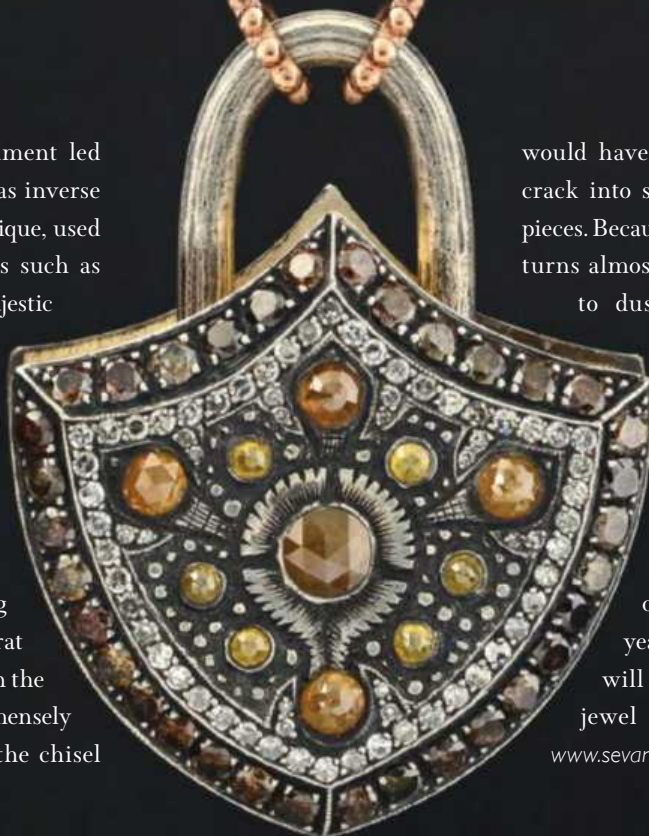
and deeper. Each experiment led to new discoveries, such as inverse layer painting. The technique, used to depict migratory birds such as seagulls flying over the majestic buildings of Istanbul, lent unusual depth to the intaglio carvings, making the world within the precious gems even more realistic.

His biggest gamble to date is probably the carving of a breathtaking 150-carat emerald. The inclusions in the gem made the carving immensely tricky – a wrong hit of the chisel

would have caused the stone to crack into smaller, less valuable pieces. Because carving essentially turns almost half of the emerald to dust, the stakes were sky-high.

The tireless 43-year-old is also set to launch a collection of unique wristwatches. The timepieces, a result of more than five years of intensive work, will no doubt be another jewel in Bicakci's crown.

www.sevanbicakci.com



Tiffany Victoria earrings with diamonds in platinum.

A HEART OF GOLD ...

... and platinum, set with diamonds. Tiffany & Co celebrates romance this month.

By HO YUN KUAN

Above, from left: Tiffany Enchant pendant with a diamond in 18-carat yellow gold; Tiffany Keys pendant with diamonds in platinum.

Return to Tiffany mini heart tag earrings with diamonds in 18-carat white gold.

Tiffany Setting solitaire ring with a 7.55-carat diamond in platinum.

Illustration LESHIA KURBATOV

Tiffany Hearts pendant with diamonds in 18-carat rose gold.



Tiffany & Co Schlumberger Sixteen Stone ring with diamonds and pink sapphires.



Tiffany East West timepiece in stainless steel with a Tiffany Blue dial and grey alligator leather strap.



From left: Tiffany Metro ring with diamonds in platinum and 18-carat yellow gold; Etoile three-row ring in platinum.



Paloma Picasso Paloma's Sugar Stack ring with pink sapphires in 18-carat rose gold.

Paloma Picasso Loving Heart earrings with diamonds in 18-carat rose gold.



The removal of vicuna's coarse guard hairs is done by hand. It takes a week of work to dehair one kilogramme of fibre, the equivalent to the fleece of four animals.

A FINE DISTINCTION

Billionaire Pier Luigi Loro Piana has been quietly revolutionising Italian fashion.

By JOSH SIMS

Pier Luigi Loro Piana concedes that he is a man obsessed. “Yes, it’s an obsession, and not down to 12 microns – which is the finest wool we have – but 0.12 microns if we could,” says the man behind the luxury textiles brand that takes his surname – and which was sold in 2013 to LVMH for €2 billion (\$3 billion), leading him gently into semi-retirement and the relief of not having to ponder the payroll for 2,600 people anymore.

As Pier Luigi has it, using man-made fibres in a blend to reduce your costs is a “huge mistake”, and not least because of the cost to quality.

But all this noodling over microns? Pier Luigi is referring to the unit of measurement for the very finest fibres – thinner than a human hair and considerably softer – from which so many of the company’s products are made. Indeed, this is the man who a few years back heard about an age-old and little-known craft on the shores on Lake Inle in Myanmar – by which fibres are extracted from lotus leaves by hand and then woven within 24 hours, before

deterioration sets in, to produce just 120g of a raw silk-like yarn – so flew out, struck a deal and bought the community’s entire output for the foreseeable future.

It is hard to square that with the company that, a few decades ago, was experimenting with polyester. But therein lay a lesson: that, as Pier Luigi has it, using man-made

Loro Piana looks created using The Blend. The ultra-fine fibres of the merged vicuna and baby cashmere wools trap body heat and prevent cold air from reaching the skin.



fibres in a blend to reduce your costs is a “huge mistake”, and not least because of the cost to quality: there is, he says, a cost too to the future, seeing how man-made fibres, unlike natural ones, take much, much longer to biodegrade. Perhaps more to the point, Loro Piana would go on to invest much in research and development to uncover what many

are yet to appreciate: that, woven cleverly, natural fibres tend to outperform synthetic ones.

"In fact, while I don't want to spin seaweed or anything, really we're fanatical about fibres because they're crucial to the functionality of the product," adds Pier Luigi, who transformed the family firm – established 1924 – in partnership with his brother Sergio, until his sad death the same month that the LVMH deal went through. "You want the strongest relationship between the character of the material and the product you produce with it. And there are very little instances in which natural fibres won't perform the best – they can be warm, cool, waterproof, incredibly comfortable. Take wool. If it's high enough quality, fine enough, about the only way it is not better than a man-made fibre is in crease-resistance."

Loro Piana at least in part owes its success since the 1970s to an almost manic pursuit of the best in class.

When it moved into vicuna, for example, the company worked with the Peruvian government first to enact laws that would save the species from extinction, and then



The Blend products for women include (from above) a Knightsbridge cape and turtleneck sweater as well as an oval stole.



bought 2,000 hectares of land to create a nature reserve for the animals. Humble wool gets the hands-on approach too, with Loro Piana having recently established long-term exclusive agreements with the few Australian and New Zealander breeders able to rear sheep with wool just 12 microns fine. When it wanted to specialise in cashmere, it formed direct relationships with Chinese government agencies to ensure supply, and spent 10 years convincing Mongolian breeders to set aside their super-fine baby cashmere (combed from the goat kids' under-fleece over

its first year of life), such that Loro Piana has almost global exclusivity on it.

Indeed, the Far East is now becoming as much a market for Loro Piana's goods as the source of its raw materials, and not simply because, as Pier Luigi puts it, "the whole Asian continent and especially China has become a fundamental market for luxury brands".

Last year, the company hosted its first Loro Piana Cashmere of the Year Award in Shanghai, and Beijing – where the company has quality testing labs – saw the global launch

of what it is calling The Blend, its first weaving together of vicuna and baby cashmere.

"But with Eastern markets we need to allow people to discover who we are, what we do and how. Local customers need to get to know us, that (what we do is) all very understated," says Pier Luigi. After all, you won't find a logo on any Loro Piana product. The company's

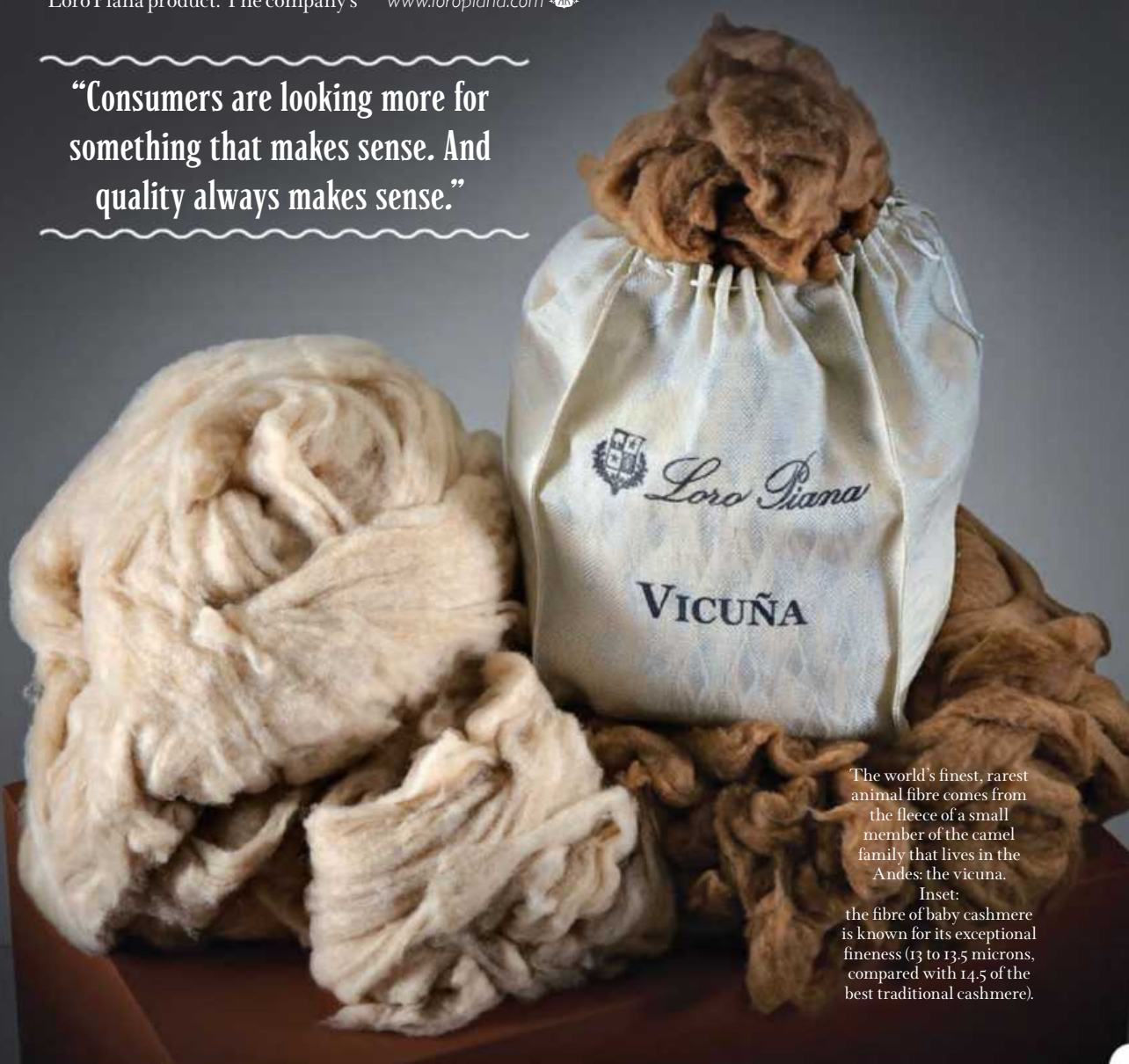
thinking is that you're either in the club that recognises quality for what it is, or, well, you're not.

"What we do is very discreet," suggests Pier Luigi. "We're not really about image, or price or publicity as so many fashion brands are. Consumers are looking more for something that makes sense. And quality always makes sense."

www.loropiana.com



"Consumers are looking more for something that makes sense. And quality always makes sense."



The world's finest, rarest animal fibre comes from the fleece of a small member of the camel family that lives in the Andes: the vicuña.

Inset: the fibre of baby cashmere is known for its exceptional fineness (13 to 13.5 microns, compared with 14.5 of the best traditional cashmere).

TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES

Montblanc's latest 4810 timepiece collection recalls its founders' fortuitous transatlantic crossing.



By KENNETH TAN

Last autumn, a group of well-heeled guests congregated at Pier A, 22 Battery Place in New York to celebrate the pre-launch of Montblanc's ode to transatlantic voyages.

Here, one could spot the Statue of Liberty across the Upper Bay. By a short stretch of imagination, you could be transported to when this monument became the welcoming symbol to the multitudes of immigrants and visitors who

arrived at turn-of-the-century New York.

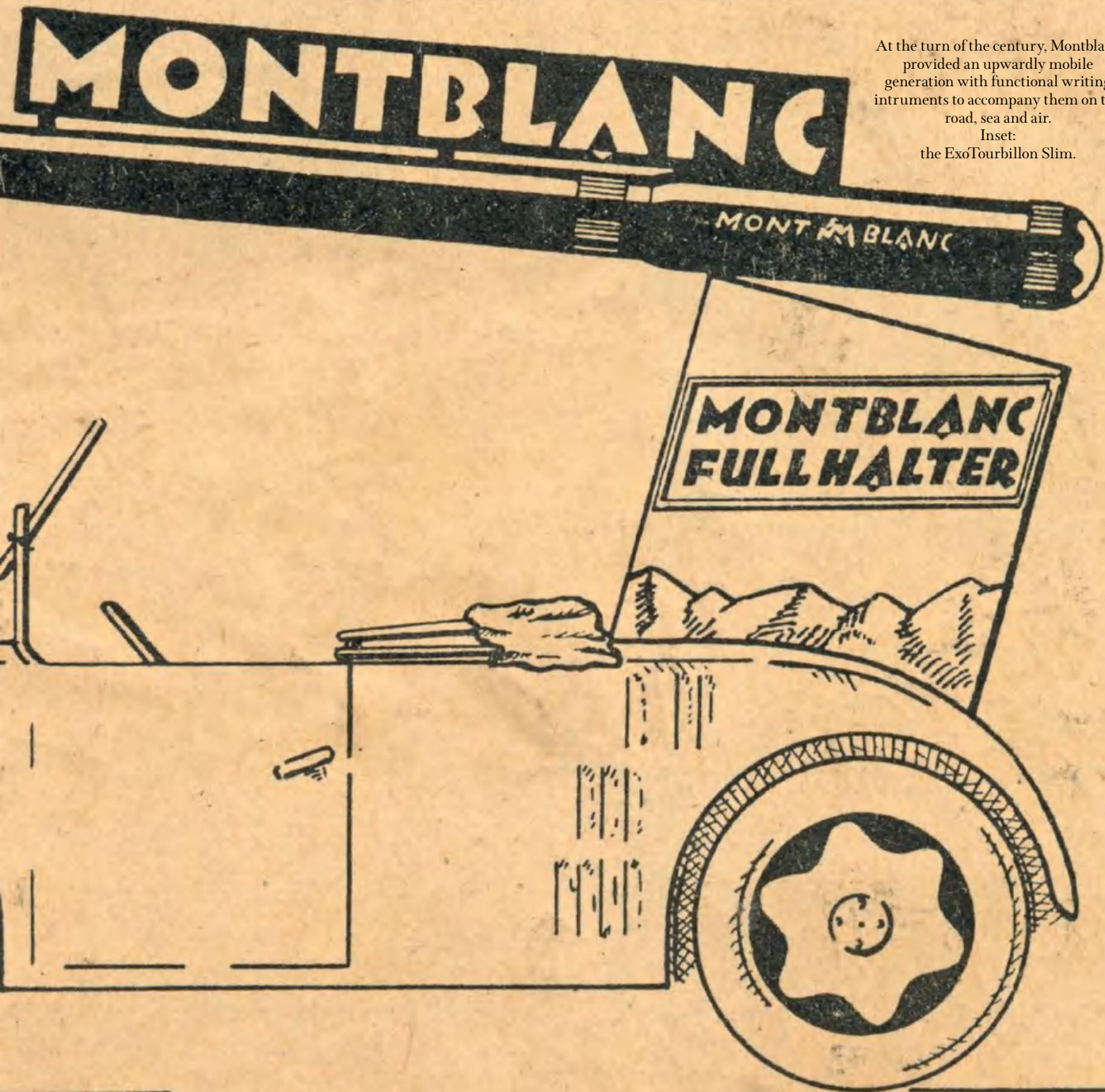
Among them were banker Alfred Nehemias, stationery trader Claus Voss and engineer August Eberstein. The spirit of their time – an age of discovery and invention – inspired travel and a great belief in progress. This desire made the trio aware of the need for a writing instrument which would hold a reserve of ink for travellers. The resulting outcome of their combined



The spirit of their time inspired travel
and a great belief in progress.

At the turn of the century, Montblanc
provided an upwardly mobile
generation with functional writing
instruments to accompany them on the
road, sea and air.

Inset:
the ExoTourbillon Slim.





The engraving 4810 first appeared on the Montblanc Meisterstück nibs.

engineering expertise and enterpr creation of the trailblazing 'sin pen' in 1906 and subsequent for Simplo Filler Pen Co.

In just three years, the R et Noir safety fountain pen introduced to the market.

Its advertising material sho a gentleman assuredly placing writing instrument into a waistcoat pocket – signifying leaking nib.

The poster proudly proclaimed word Montblanc, which was soon assumed as the name and trademark of all writing instruments produced by Simplo. This name was picked when a relative of a company



From top: the essence of craftsmanship is transmitted to the finished articles at the manufacture; Orbis Terrarum pocket watch.

ade an impassioned analogy of which had become the pinnacle of instruments – to Mont Blanc, 's highest peak.

he mountain was interpreted as a ded six-pointed white star.

The engraving 4810 first appeared e Montblanc Meisterstück nibs. It red to the height in metres of Mont is it was measured at the time.

ear, 4810 is recalled on Montblanc's iversary as a timepiece collection.

his collection (pronounced as four-eight-10), is an horological ode to Montblanc's roots.

The first iteration of this 4810 collection was unveiled in Geneva at the 2006 Salon

International de la Haute Horlogerie. This year's collection expands on its predecessor's technological and aesthetic point of view; augmented with three in-house movements and design codes which recall the maison's watchmaking heritage. The latter is exemplified by fine guilloché dials juxtaposed with the exploding Montblanc star motif. Also distinct in the 2016 iteration are red gold Roman numerals and indexes, as well as sword-shaped and skeletonised hands.

The throwback masculine elegance of

ocean liners may be clearly discerned on the collection's bigger, bolder cases. A study of mathematical proportions was required to perfect the balance of ratios between the case diameter, height and rotor weight. Refinement on the aesthetics also include a wider date opening and clear minuterie courtesy of a brilliant white Superluminova. Meanwhile, the addition of horns which appear straight above but are curved below make for a more ergonomic fit.

In the 4810 collection which debuted

The Montblanc ExoTourbillon Slim 1110 Years Edition North America with a miniature hand-painted dial.





globally last month, the highlights are the ExoTo TwinFly and Orbis Terrarum watch. The automatic ExoTo Slim boasts a svelteness of 10.14mm in height due to the inclusion of the ExoTo Slim on it, a stop-seconds mechanism is the practical solution for accurate time setting. The patented 'whip' halves the balance - versus customarily blocking the tourbillon cage which leaves the balance swinging, and likely upsetting timekeeping precision.

Encasing this in-house Calibre MB 4810 ExoTourbillon with its stop second' complication, the 18-carat red gold case of the ExoTo Slim. For ease of use, a gauge on the crown indicates the position of the crown, with position one and two for setting of the timepiece comes with the Montblanc Performance Test 500, a laboratory standard which simulates the effects of real-life wear of over 500 hours.

In the limited-edition version of the 4810 ExoTourbillon Slim, the silver-white upper dial of the non-limited ExoTourbillon Slim is replaced with miniature hand-painted maps



From top: an unequivocal assurance of quality from Montblanc; the 4810 TwinFly Chronograph with its highly visual dual time function.

of North America, Asia and Europe. That each dial is hand-painted by just one artist means no two are exactly alike. Water resistance is also improved - over its predecessor - to 50m versus the previous 30, even with the enhanced thinness of the white gold case.

On the 4810 TwinFly Chronograph, one finds an integrated dual time function. A self-winding Calibre MB 4810, in-house developed and assembled, offers 72 hours of power reserve within a 43mm stainless steel case. The same Montblanc Performance Test 500 certification accompanies each chronograph, while the sub-dial at 12 o'clock indicates the passage of day into night at the wearer's point of origin.

For those who fancy a throwback to a century ago, Montblanc's 4810 collection also offers a highly limited 110 pieces of the Montblanc 4810 Orbis Terrarum pocket watch. This smart and dandy-looking piece perfectly recalls those transatlantic ocean voyages through a dual time function which displays the entirety of the world's 24-hour time zones at a glance.

The world timer Calibre MB 29.20 was prototyped, developed and assembled in-house by the maison's watchmakers.

On a dial composed of layered sapphire crystal, red gold-plated dauphine hands offer legibility within a 53mm stainless steel case. On this pocket watch, the world timer Calibre MB 29.20 was prototyped, developed and assembled in-house by the maison's watchmakers. A diamond-enhanced milling technique was necessary to create that globe-shaped sapphire crystal dome. Under this, one is offered a view of the earth's northern hemisphere though the anti-reflective and scratch-resistant glass.

Back at Pier A, Montblanc's CEO Jerome Lambert regales the crowd with stories of the whirlwind 24 months he has had at the helm of Montblanc. This period has yielded six distinct collections, each of which point back



From top: the six-pointed star of Montblanc; a sense of adventure enabled Montblanc to also associate itself with the nascent aviation movement.

at Montblanc's own ethos of craftsmanship and the watchmaking legacy of the storied Minerva Manufacture – established in 1858 – which was acquired in 2004.

“We have now ushered a new dimension in fine watchmaking, sharing our passion by bringing back functions which excite the market; from chronograph and perpetual calendar to travel timepieces,” he says. “The first trip by our founders from Hamburg (where Montblanc is now headquartered) to New York is why we are paying tribute, in our 110th year, to the fantastic time when invention, progress and the spirit of travel conspired to bridge the continents and bring the world closer.”

www.montblanc.com 





TURN BACK THE CLOCK

The heydays of watchmaking are staging a glorious comeback
on the wrists of discerning female collectors.

By HO YUN KUAN

The original Heures Creatives Heure Audacieuse (inset) was considered bold and avant-garde when it was released four decades ago.



Vacheron Constantin Heures Creatives Heure Audacieuse

A belt and its buckle, reimagined as a wristwatch – when Vacheron Constantin debuted this design in the 1970s, it was snapped up by women who were delighted at finally seeing an unusual timepiece that reflected the liberal and free-spirited ways of the decade.

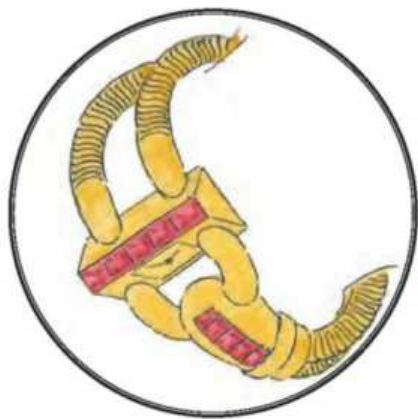
Last year, the maison unveiled an updated version of this watch at Watches&Wonders. Now made

bigger in line with the trend of women wearing chunkier timepieces, it features lines that are more curved and set with diamonds for extra sparkle. In order not to detract from the design, the winding crown was shifted to under the black satin strap.

The timepiece houses the dainty mechanical hand-wound Calibre 1055 measuring just 15.7mm. www.vacheron-constantin.com



Van Cleef & Arpels Cadenas



The unusual angled dial of Van Cleef & Arpels' Cadenas was created out of necessity. The timepiece was launched in 1935, during an era when it was considered rude for women to look at the time in public; the angled dial allowed its wearer to read the time discreetly without turning her wrist. The innovative design counts even the duchess of Windsor as a fan. She was seen wearing a platinum version with a diamond-set bracelet that later sold at an auction for SFr362,500 in 2011.

Shaped like a padlock and wrapped around the wrist with a double bracelet, the original Cadenas is a design that already has a rather large volume and heavy look about it. To cater to the preferences of today's women, Van Cleef & Arpels gave it an even bigger case, and introduced four versions: two with bracelets in yellow gold or white gold, and two with alligator straps also in yellow gold or white gold. www.vancleefarpels.com



Behind the mother-of-pearl dial is a quartz movement.
Inset: a 1939 illustration of the original watch.

A Lange & Sohne Little Lange 1

If there is one watch that defines the A Lange & Sohne brand, it is the Lange 1. Revered by the German watchmaker as the timepiece that helped it rise from the ashes of the Second World War to become the brand it is today, Lange 1 was launched in 1994 as A Lange & Sohne's first product after a long period of hiatus. Its creation marked the brand's rebirth and subsequent success.

In celebration of the iconic timepiece's 20th

anniversary in 2014, A Lange and Sohne launched limited-edition versions of Lange 1, one of which constitutes his-and-hers models. For the ladies, the aptly named Little Lange 1 is a 36.1mm watch with all the grace and functions of Lange 1 compressed into a smaller space to suit daintier wrists. The watch enjoyed an update in 2015 – this time independently and not as part of a his-and-hers set – with an unusual pale blue mother-of-pearl dial. www.alange-soehne.com



Little Lange 1 is an exceptionally elegant member of the renowned Lange 1 family.

Inset:

Lange 1 put A Lange & Sohne on the map of high-end watchmaking.



Little Lange 1 enjoyed an update in 2015 with an unusual pale blue mother-of-pearl dial.

Audemars Piguet Millenary



Clockwise from top: 1995's Millenary; a men's model from 2014; the 18-carat white gold version with a diamond-set dial from 2015.

As with most of Audemars Piguet's collection, the Millenary began as a men's watch when it was launched in 1995. The model's signature elliptical case, however, is something the brand has constantly explored in its women's pieces since the 1960s. The shape features in a gold-braided wristwatch from 1970, is cut out of tiger's eye and lined up into a bracelet in another timepiece from 1971, and is used for a unique pocket watch, also from 1971.

The ladies finally got their own Millenary last year. The off-centre dial at three o'clock leaves the rest of the face open so that the hand-wound 5201 manufacture movement can be admired.

Three versions of the new Millenary for women are available in 18-carat pink gold and white gold with a mother-of-pearl dial, and 18-carat white gold with a diamond-set dial. www.audemarspiguet.com

Parmigiani Fleurier Tonda 1950 Squelette

It may be a bit of a stretch to consider this timepiece a vintage revival. Contrary to its name, Tonda 1950 was not introduced in the 1950s, as Parmigiani Fleurier is a young brand founded only in 1996. It is, however, an iconic line that has been with the brand for a large part of its 20 years. It is as old as a Parmigiani Fleurier model can possibly get, and has a timeless aesthetic that will probably not look out of place in the 1950s.

The Squelette represents the first skeleton version of Tonda. Launched at the last Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie, it displays the same simplicity and elegance that collectors have come to associate with the line, but with the dial 'removed' to reveal the PF705 calibre within. What there actually is, is a sapphire crystal dial, frosted for a teasing reveal in the ladies' model and completely transparent for a clear view in the men's model. Two options are available for the ladies in white or rose gold, both set with diamonds on the bezel. www.parmigiani.ch



The skeletonised aesthetic of the Tonda 1950 Squelette is a unique take on the original (inset).



The Squelette represents the first skeleton version of Tonda.

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

More than a century later, Panerai continues to leave historical footprints on its birthplace of Florence.

By KAREN KWA

Hanging above the central door of Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore – known simply as Il Duomo – is a colossal clock that shows the time based on Italic Hours (also known as Julian Time and Ave Maria time). There are only a few in existence today. Its mechanism is set in a cavity between the interior and exterior facade of the Duomo, hidden from view.

Unlike modern dials, this ancient time measurement system has a single hand that sweeps anti-clockwise and completes one round in 24 hours, starting from the time of sunset.

The clock was built in 1443 by the Florentine clockmaker Angelo di Niccolo, and had its six-metre dial painted by Renaissance master painter and mathematician Paolo Uccello. The latter decorated the corners with frescoes of the four Biblical evangelists.

The Uccello treasure had been repaired and rebuilt many times in the ensuing centuries, including its mid-18th-century conversion to a 12-hour timekeeping system and a 1973 renovation that restored the

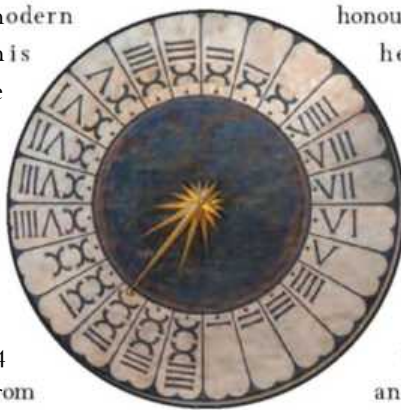
original Uccello artwork and the 24-hour mechanism. In May 2014, Panerai repaired the mechanism once again.

The remarkable story of Panerai spans over a century and a half. Its origins are rooted in a shop in Florence in 1860, before it became the official supplier of precision instruments for the Italian Navy from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Today, Panerai continues to honour its Florentine heritage by providing resources and support to local institutions, so as to aid them in their artistic and mechanical endeavours.

The original Bottega Panerai – the city's first watch shop – was located on Ponte alle Grazie. After the bridge was ravaged during the Second World War, the company moved its flagship, which it renamed Orologeria Svizzera, to the Archbishop's Palace in Piazza San Giovanni, just a few steps from Il Duomo.

While there are currently 67 boutiques in the world, the Florence store remains the spiritual and historical home to the luxury



The dial painted by Paolo Uccello.

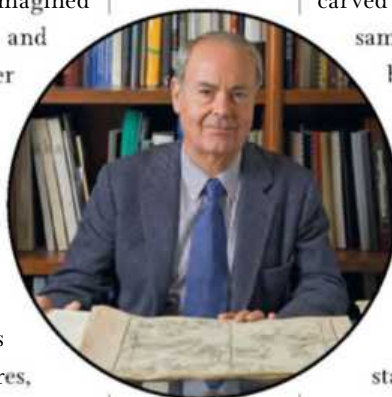
Facing page: the clock in Il Duomo can be reached by a door, positioned to the right of the main entrance.



Period exhibits and interactive multimedia devices illustrate Galilei's decisive contribution.

watchmaking company. Its facade retains several markings of its early life, but has since expanded from one to four large display windows. On the inside, the 285sqm (from 58sqm) space has been reimaged by celebrated Spanish designer and architect, Patricia Urquiola. Her liberal use of walnut wood and brass, a metal that recalls the sea and ships, keeps to the brand's marine codes.

On display are vintage timepieces and instruments, demonstrating that through its years of formative nautical adventures, Panerai has kept stride with all manner of technical advances as it evolved from a maker of purely military tools to a brand watch enthusiasts now covet and collect. One such timepiece to desire: the Radiomir Firenze



3 Days Acciaio (PAM00604), a Florence boutique exclusive.

Each of the 99 pieces is entirely hand-engraved by expert Italian craftsmen, who carved the surface of the 47mm case – the same diameter as the first watch created by Panerai in 1936 – with decorative motifs inspired by Florentine iconography. The lines engraved on the elegantly brushed case form geometric figures and symbols, such as the Florentine lily, the emblem of Tuscany's famous city.

Due to the rigidity of the brushed stainless steel, it takes one engraver more than a week to produce each case. The motifs are first drawn as a provisional sketch, using powdered chalk or magnesium powder. The lines are then engraved with a burin. As a typical feature of vintage Panerai watches,



Panerai Jupiterium recreates the geocentric viewpoint of the heavens as seen by Galileo Galilei. Facing page, from top: Room III in Museo Galilei is based on Ptolemy's *Geography*, a founding text of modern geographical studies; Paolo Galluzzi, the museum's director.



The latest in the series is the Lo Scenziato Radiomir 1940 Tourbillon GMT (PAM00559).

the case is paired with a black dial that bears a Firenze inscription.

Not far from the Piazza San Giovanni boutique is Panerai's second home, housed within the 15th-century Palazzo della Gherardesca, which is now the Four Seasons Hotel Firenze. The original frescoes, bas-reliefs, stuccowork and walls of delicate oriental silk paper festoon the hotel, in celebration of Florence's historical excellence in art and craftsmanship.

Panerai has left the cosy space untouched; only accentuating the room with furnishings



The impressive and complicated Lo Scenziato Radiomir 1940 Tourbillon GMT (PAM00559).

and materials of clean lines. And fittingly, the frescoes within the boutique depict ancient sailboats, a reminder of the brand's longstanding relationship with the Italian Navy.

In honouring its own Florentine origins, Panerai has, for many years, been promoting the genius of Galileo Galilei as a tribute to the great Tuscan scientist.

Galilei used the telescope to study the heavens systematically and, by formulating

The Radiomir Firenze 3 Days Acciaio (PAM00604) is a Florence boutique exclusive.

the law of isochronism, revolutionised the history of time measurement. Thanks to the sponsorship of Panerai, the Museo Galileo in Florence has created a section where period exhibits and interactive multimedia devices illustrate Galilei's decisive contribution.

Among ancient clocks and artifacts on display are the two surviving telescopes which Galilei built, three of his fingers and a tooth encased in a glass vase.

Pride of place goes to a planetarium-clock calendar that shows the Sun, Moon and the latter's satellite; the Medicean plane observed for the first time by Galilei in 1610. Enclosed in a 75cm wide by 86cm tall glass box, the Jupiterium has the Earth at the centre of a blue sphere.

Powered by a movement that is regulated by that of the clock, all the heavenly bodies - apart from the Earth - complete their orbits in real time.

It was on the occasion of this tribute to the most fundamental and fundamental of the great physicist, mathematician and astronomer that Panerai has created a ra-

The in-house P.3000 calibre, which is used in Radiomir Firenze 3 Days Acciaio (PAM00604), presents the main characteristics of the Panerai movements in terms of structure, robustness, accuracy and power reserve.

named Lo Scenziato (the Scientist). The latest in the series is the Lo Scenziato Radiomir 1940 Tourbillon GMT (PAM00559), produced in a limited edition of 30 pieces.

Presented for the first time in a 48mm Radiomir 1940 case of 5NPT red gold, the main attraction is undoubtedly the rotation of the tourbillon cage. The mechanism, developed by Laboratorio di Idee at the brand's manufacture in Neuchâtel,

is unusual in that a single rotation is completed in 60 seconds (instead of the traditional 60) and it rotates on a perpendicular axis, instead of parallel to the plane of the balance wheel. This special construction compensates for the force of gravity, ensuring accurate timekeeping. The skeletonising of the P. 3005/S movement also brings this timepiece to life. The arrangement, the look and action of every mechanical component can be appreciated both through the skeletonised dial and the transparent case back.

It is through such technical distinctions that Panerai, with its past firmly rooted in the city of Florence, is paving the way into the future.

www.panerai.com



FAST-MOVER ADVANTAGE

As the first to stake a claim in the ultra-luxury SUV market, the game-changing Bentayga is all about the superlatives.

By ALYWIN CHEW



With the introduction of Bentayga, British automaker Bentley Motors is carving out an ultra-luxurious path in the SUV segment.

Scheduled for release in the first quarter of this year, the British automaker has dubbed Bentayga as “the fastest, most powerful,

most luxurious and most exclusive SUV in the world”.

Indeed, there is no other SUV in the world now that can be compared to this beast, which is armed with a twin-turbocharged 6.0-litre W12 engine that takes drivers from 0-100km/hr in just 4.1 seconds. Though it



may be based on Volkswagen's MLB platform, the same design used for Audi's second generation Q7 and the new Porsche Cayenne, Bentayga bears all the trademarks of a typical Bentley with its muscular physique that is anchored by the brand's famous matrix grille.

On the inside, the SUV is decked out with bull hides sourced from Europe, diamond-quilted seats and doors, and exceptional veneers produced by the marque's finest craftsmen. Those looking to push the envelope can opt to include the exclusive Breitling Mulliner Tourbillon dashboard clock that costs almost as much as the SUV itself. The comprehensive suite of tech offerings are impressive too, with typical features such as adaptive cruise control and parking assist complemented with hill descent control, a head-up display and a night vision mode that allows drivers to detect obstacles beyond the range of the headlights.

Much will be riding on the success of Bentayga, including the support of the British government which had agreed to let Bentley invest in a new facility in Crewe that manufactures most of the car's components. Furthermore, the government had also backed the project with £9.5 million (\$20

From above: the cockpit architecture is based on double Bentley wings, giving it balance and symmetry; the infotainment system supports 30 languages. Facing page: Bentayga delivers increased axle articulation for improved grip and greater comfort levels when driving off-road.

Queen Elizabeth II was among the first to place an order for this ultra-luxurious SUV.

million) from its Regional Growth Fund, used to boost economic growth and employment in the UK.

For now, the massive £800-million investment by Bentley – one of the biggest in the marque's history – seems to have paid off. Initial reviews of Bentayga have been largely positive and the car is already sold out for the first year of production, meaning that those hoping to get their hands on one will have to wait till at least 2017.

The fact that Queen Elizabeth II was among the first to place an order quite rightly suggests that this ultra-luxurious SUV is fit for royalty.

According to industry experts, the introduction of this four-wheel drive comes at a rather opportune time for Bentley, seeing how SUV sales have been growing around the world, and an increasing number of wealthy car lovers have shown an inclination

for SUVs as a means of setting themselves apart from the super car crowd. Global information company IHS expects SUV sales across all price brackets to continue to grow, with those in Europe estimated to expand by 27 per cent this year.

www.bentleymotors.com



A line of five Porsche sports cars, including a white Cayman, a blue Cayman, a red Cayman, a silver Cayman, and a dark Cayman, are driving on a winding asphalt road in Langkawi. The road is surrounded by lush green trees and vegetation. The cars are in motion, and the background is slightly blurred, suggesting speed. The white Cayman in the foreground has a license plate that reads 'SKR244'.

GRAND TOUR-ISMO

Langkawi offers just enough diversity in its landscape to thrill any Porsche driver.

By SAMYEN

There is a road in the north-west of Langkawi, the only one in fact, that leads to Datai Cove. The 161, as it is known, is an uninterrupted stretch of bends and straights, a beautiful road for driving. Leading up to Els Club, it is quiet and peaceful most days. On this balmy day, though, the usual serenity was punctuated by growls of Porsche engines rocketing across asphalt.

Driving a Porsche is always an experience. A precise blend of power and style, it always leaves an invigorating impression. Driving Porsche Malaysia's entire range of cars – featuring the 911, Boxster,

Cayman, Cayenne, Panamera and Macan lines – is a life-affirming occurrence.

Differing demands require differing models. From the ample space of the Macan to the sumptuous comfort of the Panamera, from the deceptive power of the Cayenne to the raw, unadulterated might of the 911, Porsche's range is impressive. Underlining all that is the Porsche DNA – its sports car heritage. You'll notice it, that indefinable and unquantifiable hum of vigour that courses through the contours of the car, be it Porsche's twist on SUVs or the unmistakable 911. Place your hands on the steering wheel, and suddenly



This Langkawi experience, called Driving Dreams with Porsche, was organised for the first time by the German marque for Asia-Pacific journalists.



Suddenly, all that mechanical might is yours to harness,
egging you on to greater speeds.



The Porsches feel at home, whether weaving through traffic in Kuah town or letting loose on unpopulated village roads.

all that mechanical might is yours to harness, egging you on to greater speeds.

Driving from the secluded refuge of Four Seasons Langkawi in Tanjung Rhu, circuiting the island takes you from bustling urban towns to quiet kampong roads, between paddy fields and beaches, horizontal straights and curvy hilly ascents. The Porsches feel perfectly at home in all these environments, whether it is weaving through traffic in Kuah town or letting fully loose on unpopulated village roads.

The Macans and Cayennes represent the SUV segment, here being the Macan S,



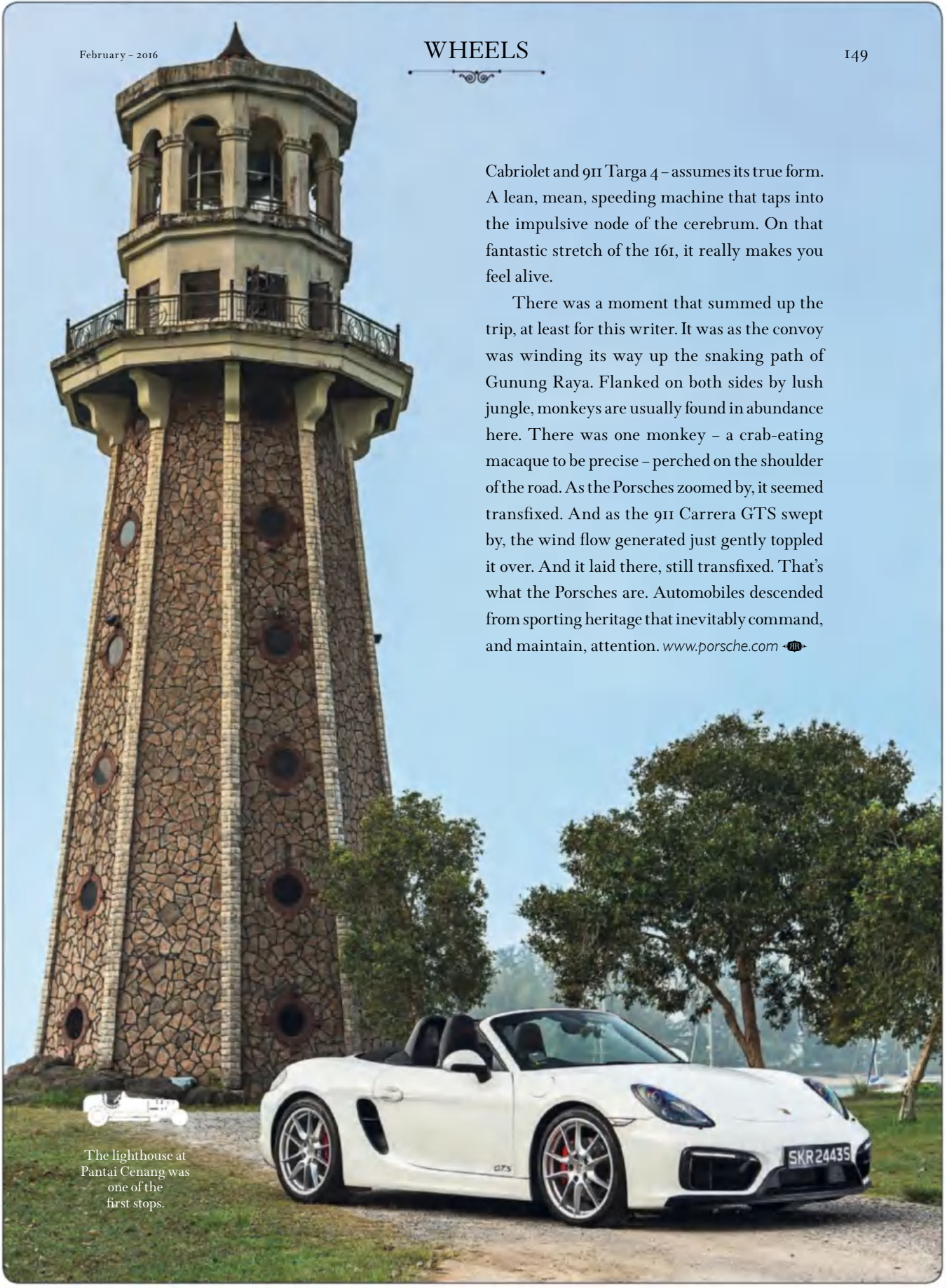
Drivers were kept updated on road conditions via walkie-talkies.

Macan Turbo, Cayenne S and the E-Hybrid and Diesel versions of the Cayenne S. They feel well-rounded; urban vehicles with an urge to go off-road; tamed beasts that could roar if they chose. The Panamera 4 and Panamera S (as well as the SE-Hybrid) sedans feel the most practical – domesticated, yet capable of going the distance.

And then there is the Boxster, Cayman and the 911. In towns, they feel bridled. Always itching to zoom ahead, constrained. Once freed from the shackles of traffic, any one of the cars – Boxster GTS, Cayman GTS, 911 Turbo, 911 Carrera GTS, 911 Carrera GTS

Cabriolet and 911 Targa 4 – assumes its true form. A lean, mean, speeding machine that taps into the impulsive node of the cerebrum. On that fantastic stretch of the 161, it really makes you feel alive.

There was a moment that summed up the trip, at least for this writer. It was as the convoy was winding its way up the snaking path of Gunung Raya. Flanked on both sides by lush jungle, monkeys are usually found in abundance here. There was one monkey – a crab-eating macaque to be precise – perched on the shoulder of the road. As the Porsches zoomed by, it seemed transfixed. And as the 911 Carrera GTS swept by, the wind flow generated just gently toppled it over. And it laid there, still transfixed. That's what the Porsches are. Automobiles descended from sporting heritage that inevitably command, and maintain, attention. www.porsche.com



The lighthouse at Pantai Cenang was one of the first stops.

GATEWAY PLAN

Shama Medini brings an investment approach into the heart of Iskandar Malaysia.

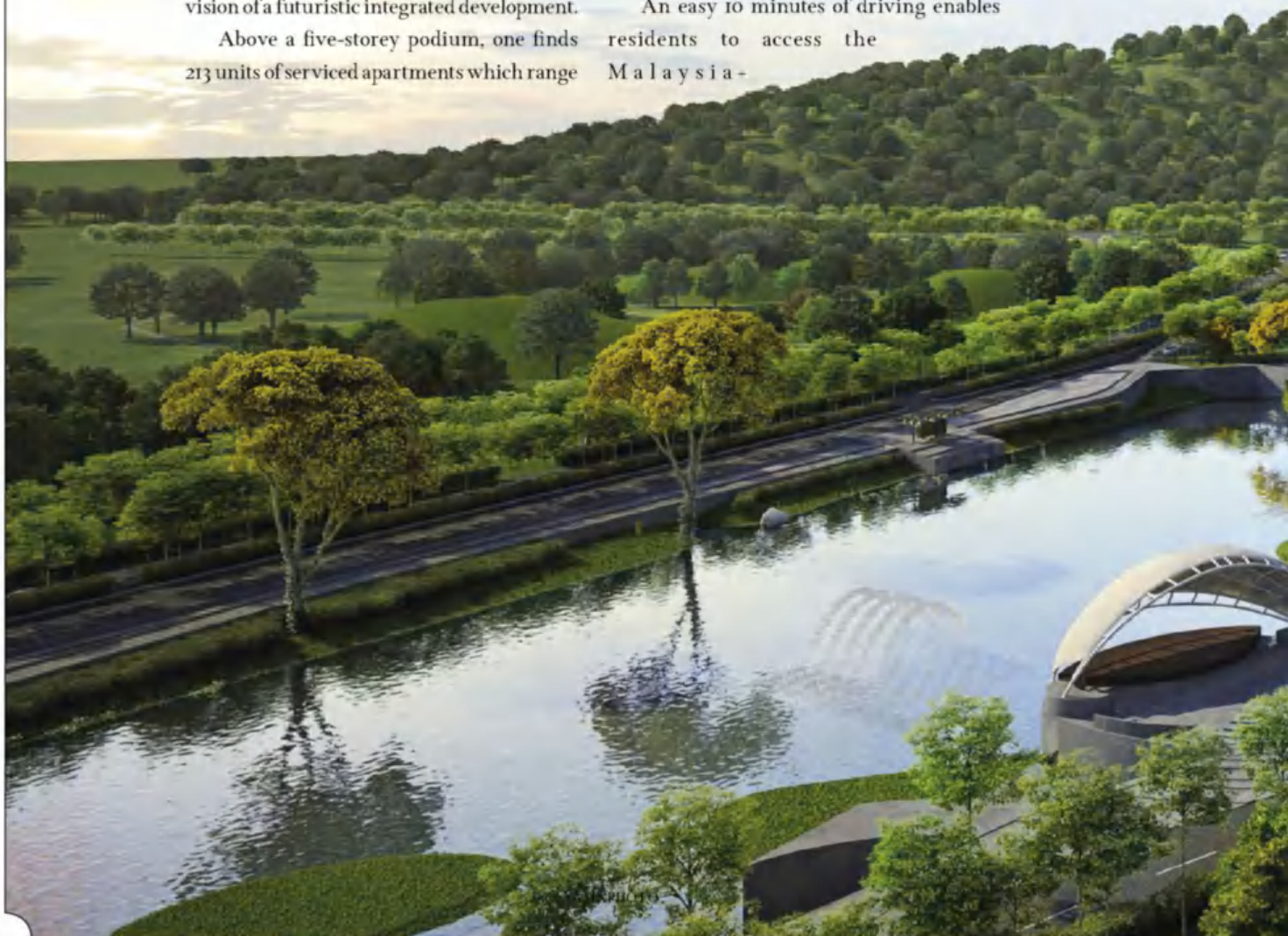
By KENNETH TAN

The urban fantasia of Nusajaya is where one finds gleaming offices, country clubs and bungalows by the marina. Here lies Shama Medini, a notable highlight in UMCity's vision of a futuristic integrated development.

Above a five-storey podium, one finds 213 units of serviced apartments which range

from studio units (priced from approximately RM756,000) to three-bedroom units which offer over 185sqm of living space. This RM227-million project is fronted by five hectares of landscaped parkland.

An easy 10 minutes of driving enables residents to access the Malaysia -



**This RM227-million project is fronted
by five hectares of landscaped parkland.**



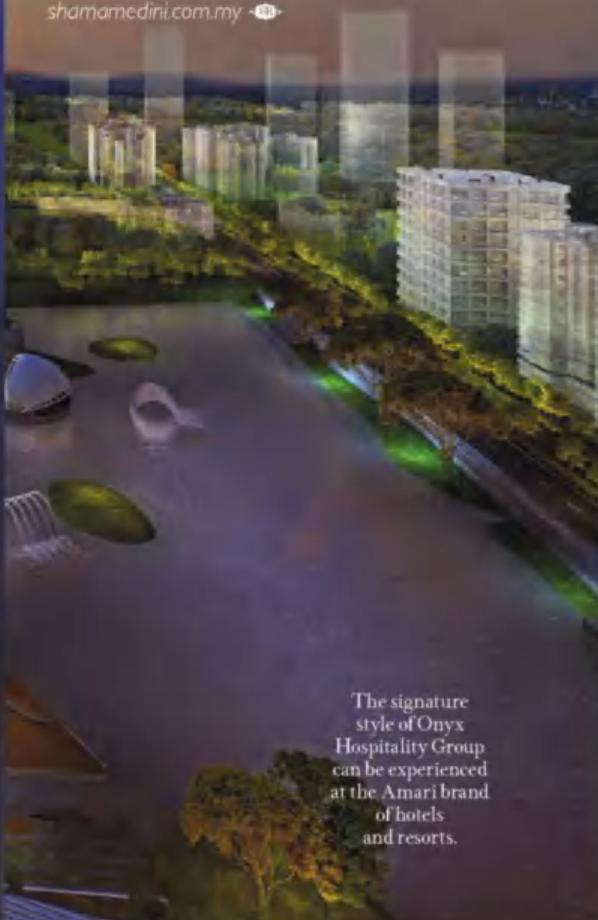
Shama Medini is situated in an area that is incentivised for corporate businesses and foreign ownership.



Singapore Second Link while 20 minutes takes them to Senai International Airport. Planned transportation infrastructure includes the proposed high-speed rail which will link Singapore and the Iskandar Region to Kuala Lumpur.

Onyx Hospitality Group, famed for operating properties in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Bangkok, will manage these serviced residences. A similarly international flair will also be present in Shama Bistro, a rooftop restaurant, and the multiple amenities which include a gym, playground, outdoor pavilion and swimming pool. Targeted for completion by the third quarter of 2018, Shama Medini is another project undertaken by Samsung C&T, whose portfolio of buildings includes Petronas Twin Towers and Burj Khalifa.

shamamedini.com.my



The signature style of Onyx Hospitality Group can be experienced at the Amari brand of hotels and resorts.

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55th
ANNIVERSARY
Grand Seiko



RARE ESSENTIALS

Grand Seiko unveils its Spring Drive GMT
Limited Edition as a celebration of watchmaking.



- 1) The signature three golden hands of a Grand Seiko chronograph nestles in the 55th anniversary box. 2) Models displaying the evening's talking pieces. 3) Watatime's managing director Brian Tham (left) and founder Tham Sze Wah at the event. 4) Guests getting a look at some hard-to-find pieces, specially made available for the night. 5) Good spirits ensued with Grand Seiko connoisseurs connecting over their love for this brand. 6) An in-depth explanation on Grand Seiko timepieces.



The event enabled guests to have an intimate encounter with the marvellous Spring Drive GMT 9R66 Caliber.



By KENNETH TAN

Grand Seiko – the paragon of Japanese watchmaking – introduced its limited-edition Spring Drive GMT to a gathering of approximately 50 timepiece connoisseurs last December. Held at the Renaissance-styled Azzuro Cafe in Pavilion KL, the event enabled guests to have an intimate encounter with the marvellous Spring Drive GMT 9R66 Caliber.

This self-winding mechanical timepiece is accurate to +/- 15 seconds in a month, regulated by

the smooth electromagnetic controlled regulation in the mainspring.

Amid music, wine and canapes, guests were regaled by the finer details of a Grand Seiko, which ranged from the Zaratsu polishing to the arduous journey which the watchmaker undertakes to become responsible for making the Grand Seiko. A runway show also featured Grand Seiko's 55th anniversary collection, namely, the Spring Drive Chronograph GMT and the Mechanical Hi Beat GMT. 



The St Regis Macao, Cotai Central is ideally positioned within Macau's coveted Cotai Strip.

February 4, 2016

157



IN MACANESE STYLE

The newly unveiled St Regis Macao brings its interpretations of luxury to the Las Vegas of Asia.

By MARK LEAN



From the cobblestone streets lined with shops peddling homespun delicacies like coconut ice cream, crunchy almond biscuits and roasted meat slices, it's clear that Macau still retains a semblance of quaintness.

It's one of the reasons behind the St Regis Macao's commissioning of Portuguese artist Gil Araujo to create the breathtaking centrepiece mural at the St Regis Bar, aptly naming it *Harmony*. This work is a brilliant multi-coloured portrayal of the tradition, history and modernity of the location

The mural comprises four layers and 8,000 painted glass parts, highlighted by six LED screens that produce a glittering perspective effect. A special type of paint was used on the 8,000 glass segments, bringing forth a stained glass effect. Green symbolises Macau; blue and white personifies Portugal; while reds and yellows represent Chinese heritage.

It's also here that the Bloody Mary gets its Macanese makeover, morphing into what its creators Marcel Kloet and Oscar Martinez term the Maria do Leste. Their well-considered riff

The Metropolitan Suites provide premier views of the vibrant Cotai Strip from both the palatial living space (above) and the opulent separate bedroom. Inset, from left: artist Gil Araujo, general manager Paul Cunningham, and emcee Maria Chen.



on the perennial cocktail comprises pink peppercorns, limes, piri piri, cinnamon, paprika, tomato juice and vodka. As an accompaniment, the St Regis Bar team presents on trays with wave motifs appropriated from the city's famed cobblestone lanes, Portuguese chourico, Chinese egg tarts and ocean-inspired lobster, served with celery and sea salt.

The hotel's dining destination, The Manor, is in effect, five separate spaces – The Dining Room, The Wine Gallery, The Verandah, The

Penthouse Kitchen and The Library – each of which has been designed to provide just the right ambience for both intimate dinners and larger groups.

Meanwhile, at the Iridium Spa, located on the 38th level, the traditions of The Iridium Room at The St Regis New York are revived and expanded upon. Here, gemstone-based treatments take centre stage, and are selected according to one's intended mood-enhancing objectives. Treatment rooms are tastefully decorated, and guests are advised to place their phones and watches away to embark on spa experiences free from digital interruptions.

According to Josef Dolp, Starwood's vice president for Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Korea: "Luxury came a little late into Macau."

But he hopes that this will change with the introduction of this St Regis property. He cites the luxury chain's ensemble of stellar amenities such as 24-hour butler service, experiences like the champagne sabering ritual, and emphasis on technology including the new St Regis Butler app that connects guests with their butlers before, during and after their stay.

A spacious marble bathroom with walk-in shower and deep soaking bathtub promise an indelible stay.

Highlights in the 400-room St Regis Macao include the Remede product range in bathrooms.

St Regis Macao include a soothing interior scheme of calming beiges and browns, accentuated with aquamarine-tone cushions, a pillow menu, 140cm LED television, the Remede product range in bathrooms as well as complimentary Wi-Fi.

The St Regis butlers are on hand to tend to a wide range of guests' needs and wants including morning coffees served at specific times, suit and shirt pressings, dinner reservations and arrangements to collect shopping from stores.

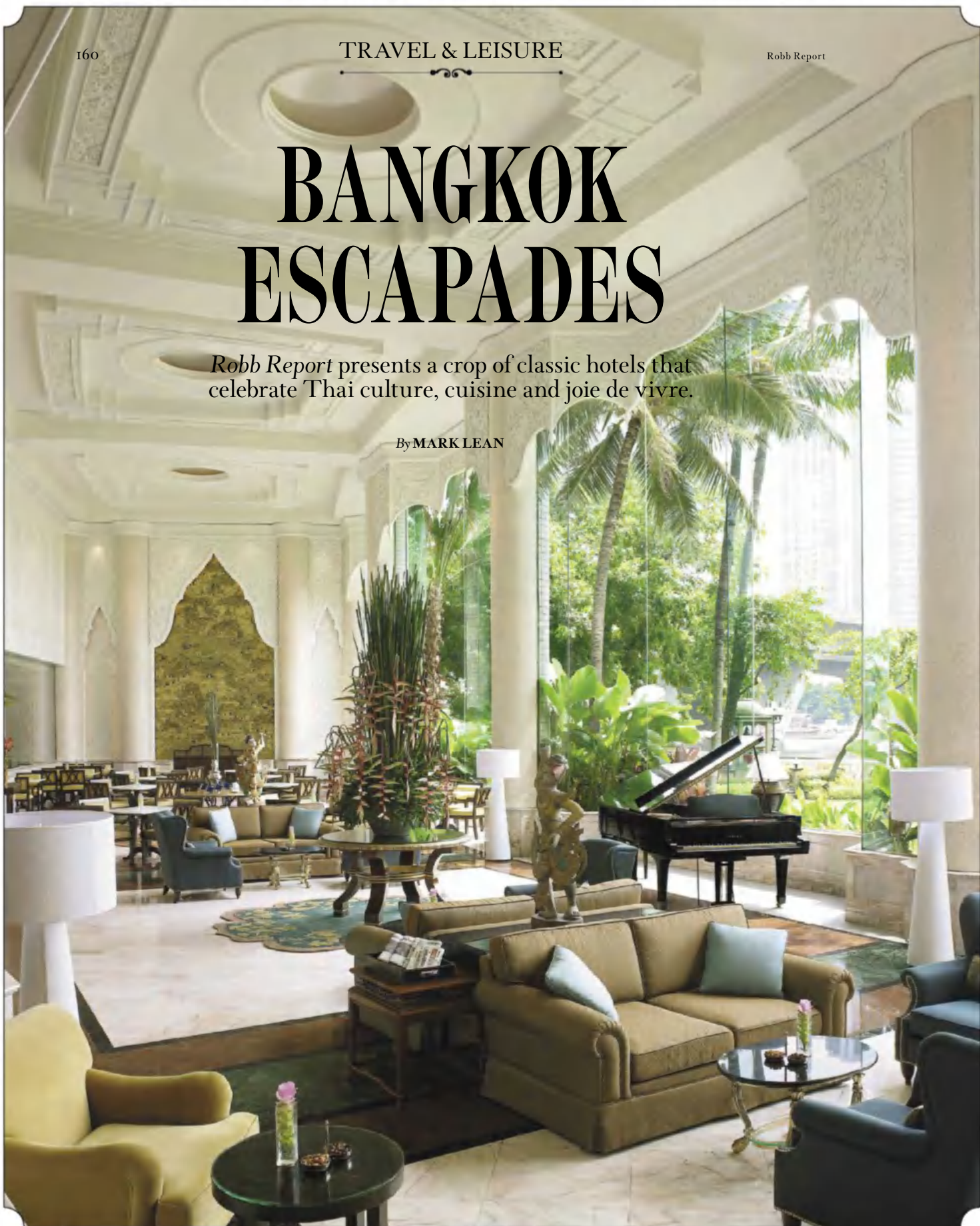
Highlights in the 400-room

Dolp believes that the St Regis approach of planting properties in exotic locales such as Lhasa and now, in Macau, heightens for guests a finer appreciation for luxury and its trappings in locations selected for their city buzz, pristine natural settings or in Macau's case, its high-rolling reputation of glamour and bling. www.stregismacao.com

BANGKOK ESCAPADES

Robb Report presents a crop of classic hotels that celebrate Thai culture, cuisine and joie de vivre.

By MARK LEAN



SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, BANGKOK



Dining choices at Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok include Salathip, The Chocolate Boutique (below) and Riverside Lounge (facing page).

Across the majestic Chao Phraya river is the Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok that nods towards both aesthetics and hospitality of the Thai capital's heritage. The design of all 802 rooms in this storied hotel pay homage to traditional Thai arts and crafts, considered by many as a melange of Cambodian, Indian and Sri Lankan art forms that resulted from the founding of the Sukhothai kingdom in the 13th century.

But while the hotel's numerous objets d'art might have ancient origins, its rooms and amenities are thoroughly up-to-date, and include complimentary Wi-Fi, flat-screen televisions as well as one of the most well-equipped and picturesque gyms in the city,

featuring a Power Plate machine – perfect if you want to spend less time at the gym and more moments by the pool.

The walls of the rooms, on the other hand, are adorned with emblematical framed silver bullet coins, delicate betel leaf holders as well as festive art works depicting the popular annual Loy Krathong festival, the most popular venue of which is on the banks of the Chao Phraya where the hotel is located.

Meanwhile, at Salathip, the hotel's Thai restaurant, celebrated chef

Tussanee Putkaew has crafted dishes like *nuea ka ta roan* – sizzling beef tenderloin – as well as her zesty version of *som tum*, papaya and carrot salad served with tender pork shoulder. www.shangri-la.com/bangkok/shangrila



At the end of a
productive day,
retreat to the 370-
room property's only
classically Thai suite.





The spectacular 36th-floor Thai Suite is designed around the concept of a traditional Thai luxury home.

THE PENINSULA, BANGKOK

The Thai capital possesses a substantial pocketbook of charms, and it's at The Peninsula where those qualities are most abundant. Start from the award-winning spa, a triple-level colonial-inspired building where guests may opt for the Simply Peninsula Royal Thai massage. This sublime treatment features a delightfully relaxing pressure point massage, light stretching, and a warm herbal compress infused with ginger and

lemongrass to untangle kinks in one's shoulders and back. Therapists at The Peninsula Spa are trained at the venerable Wat Pho Temple Massage School so you know you're in good hands.

The cultural immersion continues with a tour of local markets and a hands-on cooking lesson by the hotel's chef of Thai cuisine Chamnan Thepchana. The chef's knowledge and expertise is matched only by his sense of humour, all which become evident

as he takes guests through the precise preparation of Thai staples like *tom yam goong*, *pad thai* and mango sticky rice.

And at the end of a productive day, retreat to the 370-room property's only classically Thai suite, a veritable space of calm and sophistication, swathed in a burnished gold and rich brown colour palette: teak flooring, exquisite metallic silk upholstery and gorgeous wood carvings.

www.peninsula.com/bangkok



ANANTARA SIAM BANGKOK HOTEL

This hotel capitalises on its central Rajadamri location, providing guests with insider know-how and cultural cachet, the latter of which includes a Buddhist merit-making ceremony at the lobby just before sunrise. Another attraction is the recently refurbished rooms, an East-West

stores and expert tailors to little-known weekend market stalls.

After flurrying at the shops, retreat to the hotel's Aqua bar, one of Bangkok's most popular watering holes, frequented by the city's movers and shakers who come for some quiet in the open-air garden enclave at the heart of a city known for its intense buzz.

The hotel's Sunday brunch is also a popular social event.

marriage of contemporary style and furnishings in calming shades of cream and caramel. There is also the all-marble bathroom with a tub – perfect to decompress in after a long day.

Guests have access to the hotel's dedicated shopping gurus, whose retail knowledge stretches far and wide, spanning the best high-end

The hotel's Sunday brunch is also a popular social event, showcasing Japanese, Indian, Italian, Chinese and Thai cuisines; a foie gras corner; the freshest seafood and carvery sections; and tempting cocktails ranging from Martinis and mimosas to quintessentially Thai chilli Bloody Marys.

www.siam-bangkok.anantara.com



Anantara Siam Bangkok's many offerings include Italian restaurant Biscotti (above left), the Anantara Presidential Suite (this image) and tranquil courtyards (inset).





THE WRITE STUFF

Montblanc's M Collection was the highlight in a night of revelry.

By KENNETH TAN



1) The highly recognisable Montblanc fountain pen and nib. 2) Guests at the evening event pose with models. 3) Viewing of Montblanc timepieces at the well-stocked Chateau 33 bar. 4) The porcelain flagon of Royal Salute 21-year-old. 5) Montblanc timepieces were among the evening's highlights. 6) Dato' H'ng Ban Choon of Chateau 33 presents one of the guests with a prize.

Drams of delicious golden Royal Salute 21-year-old whisky were a talking point, as were the writing instruments and timepieces by Montblanc.

At the East-meets-West-styled Chateau 33 dining room and lounge in Penang, an eclectic mix of luxury references came together for guests of *Robb Report Malaysia*. Drams of delicious golden Royal Salute 21-year-old whisky were a talking point, with many connoisseurs appreciating the subtleties of its aroma which offers notes of lemon, tea, coconut and chocolate.

To the sounds of a live jazz band, guests also perused the writing instruments and timepieces by Montblanc, which included the recently launched Montblanc M, a modern expression of a writing instrument realised by the famed industrial designer Marc Newson. The night included a tasting of cigars from FWC Connoisseurs and a viewing of the latest collection of polo-inspired fashion apparel by La Martina. 

BE MY VALENTINE

Marini's on 57 celebrates love and gastronomy this month.

By KENNETH TAN



Photos KENNETH FOO

“I wanted to offer diners the full range of flavours; from salty and sweet to sour and spice.”

To celebrate the giddy heights of romance, there's always the option of Kuala Lumpur's highest restaurant. Marini's on 57, which commands panoramas of the urban jungle, has conceived a Valentine's Day menu intended to replicate sensations of 'amore'.

Its head chef Federico Michieletto has concocted an eight-course experience (RM1,999++ per couple for a window table) based on seasonal ingredients. Diners may expect their appetites to be whetted by a flute of Prosecco, an aperitif to the feast ahead.

Expect winter root vegetables such as turnips made into a consomme and paired with a goose liver parfait, as well as green asparagus anointed with sevruga caviar.

An antipasti of uni on scrambled egg white offers gustatory hits of sea and umami on soft textures.

“I wanted to offer diners the full range of flavours; from salty and sweet to sour and spice,” Michieletto says. He elects to have the ingredients speak for themselves, with a minimal intervention of salt and pepper on roasted Kobe beef, served with a side of potato puree.

To cap it off, the chef uses the quintessential flower of love, the rose, as the flavourful accent in the sorbet, served with house-made chocolates. In true Italian style, Michieletto explains the key to unlocking that sense of romance at a dinner. “When your stomach is happy, you are in love.” marinis57.com

Feel on top of the world this Valentine's Day by sharing a special meal with a special someone at Marini's on 57.



WINE AND DINE

Malaysia's FWC Connoisseurs is building a haven for those who appreciate the finer things in life.

Photos ERIC CHOW/BLINK STUDIO



By **KENNETH TAN**

Since its founding in 2001, FWC Connoisseurs (the acronym stands for Fine Wine and Cigars) has continually enthralled the Klang Valley scene with its unique array of products and a leading-class service. Its latest venture is the glasshouse-like Connoisseurs Cafe in Jalan Bukit Bintang's retail and entertainment precinct. "Our approach for this is to continue offering great food and drinks in a casual ambience, while offering patrons a chance to enjoy the life that takes place outside," says Ong Han Kwang, director of FWC Connoisseurs.

This new concept is part of a success story which stems from the group's passion and expertise in the areas of cigars, food and drink.

Ong, whose personal favourite smoke is Hoyo de Monterrey Petit Robusto ("for its consistent great flavours of dark chocolate and nuttiness") points to the constant checking of cigar stocks. "The right level of humidity is essential in caring for cigars, and this requires a personal touch," he says. "On rainy days, you adjust for a lower humidity and we look in on our cigars between two and three times a week to ensure they are ageing well."

With a huge portfolio of cigars originating from

The classically inspired Connoisseurs Lounge & Restaurant at KLGCC provides a thoughtful repose for golfers.

Inset:
Ong Han Kwang, FWC Connoisseurs' director.

The Connoisseurs Lounge & Restaurant possesses an inventive kitchen which provides the gastronomic complement.



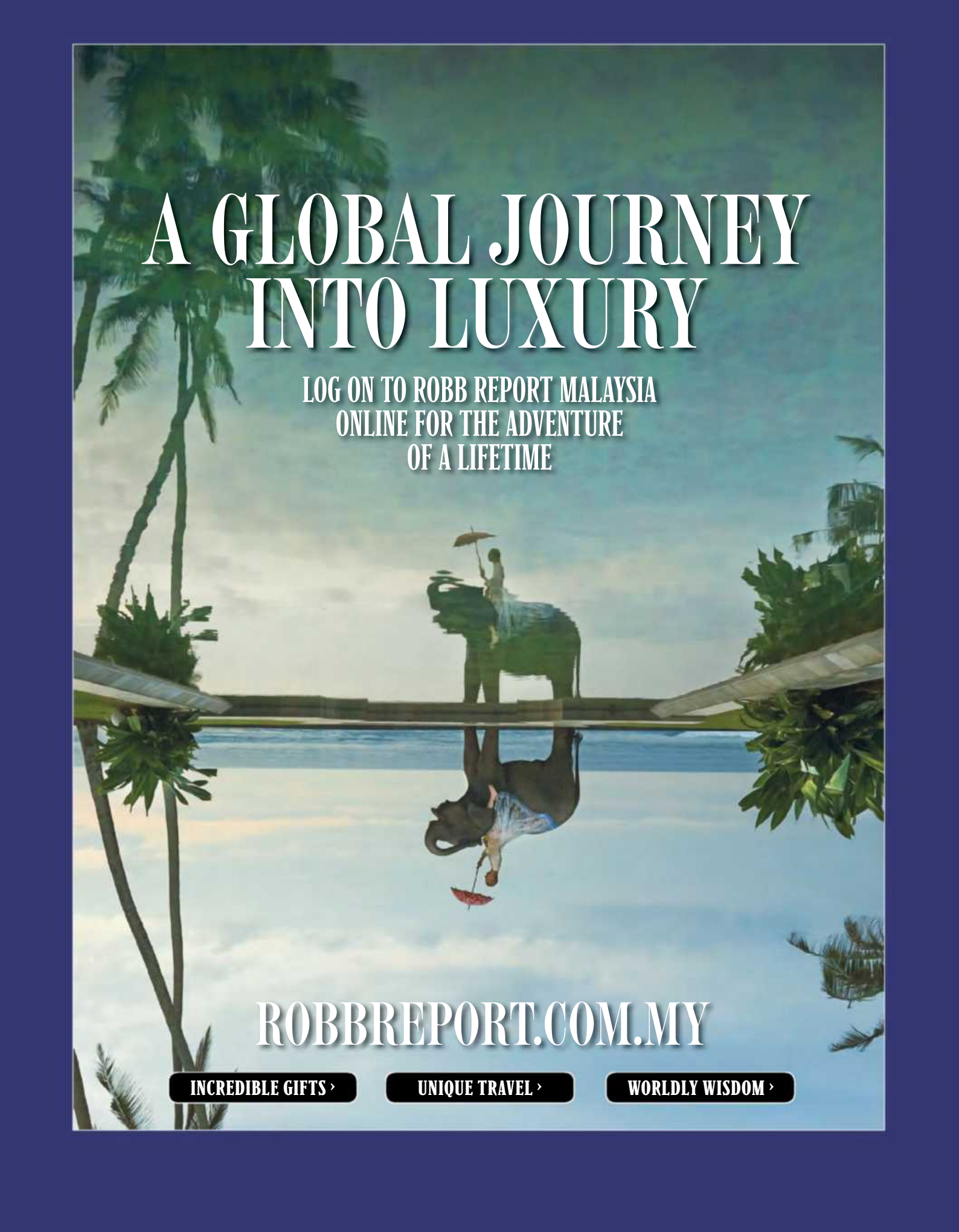
Cuba, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and other countries, one may walk into the Connoisseurs Lounge & Restaurant at the Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club and discover momentous cigars such as the limited-edition Cohiba Sublimes of 2004 (RM738). At 164mm and with a ring gauge of 54, this champion cigar is made with tobacco leaves picked off the top of the plant, and subsequently aged for two years before blending. It explodes with flavours of cocoa and coffee with a satisfying, aromatic finish.

At the same time, the ample wine list which features wines from South Africa, Italy, Spain, Australia and the US, includes stellar

vintages such as the Super Tuscan Terrestre Vendemmia of 2001 (RM3,800). Composed of 100 per cent Sangiovese, this vintage is a complex symphony which undergoes five years of alternate barrel ageing, from large oaken casks to chestnut and cherry barriques.

To this array of fine wines and cigars, the Connoisseurs Lounge & Restaurant possesses an inventive kitchen which provides the gastronomic complement. Its miso cod is topped with Hokkaido scallop, crispy whitebait and citrus sauce, creating that sense of surprise and wonder which FWC Connoisseurs seeks to transmit to its clientele. www.connoisseurs.com.my

The restaurant's miso cod, topped with a toothsome Hokkaido scallop and zesty citrus.

A tropical scene featuring palm trees and a person riding an elephant, with the entire scene reflected in a pool of water. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

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IN FULL SWING

Playtime has officially begun: chef Jeff Ramsey is looking to put the wonder and delight back into Kuala Lumpur's fine dining scene with his exquisitely prepared modern Japanese tapas.

By RENYI LIM



Nowhere in the city is there a restaurant more serious about having fun than at Babe, at Work @ Clearwater in Damansara Heights. Under chef Jeff Ramsey's creative direction, Babe's signature

Japas, or modern Japanese tapas, has been entertaining waves of curious Malaysian gourmands, all of whom have eagerly cavorted through Ramsey's culinary playground.

His cooking is as much a feat of discipline as it is of imagination –

the Japanese-American chef won a Michelin star while at the helm of the much-feted Tapas Molecular Bar at Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Tokyo.

With that achievement firmly in hand, Ramsey continues to

Photos MARCUS WONG/ BLINK STUDIO

“Kuala Lumpur is exciting to me because I feel the time is right to introduce a new way of food appreciation.”

dream up edible marvels such as wagyu puffs, reinterpreted onde-onde kuih, and Mick Jagger buns with black *karaage*.

Ironically, I need structure in my kitchen to be creative. It's only with a starting point as a frame of reference that I can begin to stretch boundaries, which I very much enjoy doing.

I'm very focused on developing a 'kitchen culture' at Babe that's egalitarian and gives each team member the freedom to explore new ways of expressing themselves through food. Everyone in my kitchen is called chef, across all rankings, because every position is earned and should be recognised.

Teamwork is key in a good kitchen. I'd rather coach my team than dictate how to do things – they are driving their own careers, and I'm here to help empower them by providing the resources and a support system. You'll see and feel this sense of passion, pride and ownership in Babe's food.

Japas is my personality on a plate. I've applied everything I've learnt up until now to Babe's concept, from my Japanese background to working with the Spanish chef Jose Andres of elBulli, as well as falling head over heels for the *izakaya* way of eating.

Kuala Lumpur is exciting to me because

I feel the time is right to introduce a new way of food appreciation. With my experience, knowledge and exposure, I hope to introduce Malaysia to a higher level of heartfelt service, a new quality of produce, and an approachable, inclusive dining experience.

My former playgrounds - Chicago and Tokyo



– are amazing, inspiring food cities. Chicago is extremely underrated: the only outlet that creative types have in this Midwestern, blue-collar city is through the f&b industry, be it a hipster coffee shop or a high-end steakhouse. Food is a way for them to express themselves. **The Japanese are perfectionists** and have such a genuine commitment to providing incredible service. Whether it's a little *izakaya* or a hotel restaurant, you get the best service all the time. They present

you with something using both hands – small heartfelt gestures like that make all the difference.

When I earned my first Michelin star, I was extremely thrilled. At the time, I was a young chef shooting for the stars. It was one of the biggest accomplishments of my life.

The most decadent ingredient I've ever handled has been white bamboo shoots from Miyamaso, which is outside of Kyoto. It's known as the original foraging restaurant – they've been doing the 'farm to fork' concept for the past 45 years, way before Noma. I worked there for one surreal week, and they would harvest these shoots, which had never seen sunlight, then roast them in a fire pit while they were still encased in a thick layer of soil. These were the most tender, super-sweet and succulent morsels of white bamboo.

If I could cook with any chef in history, I'd join Kitaoji Rosanjin's kitchen. He was Japan's own Renaissance man, who had many talents and passions. Beside ceramics, calligraphy, and art, he was also a restaurateur. Rosanjin was supposed to be designated as a Living National Treasure by the Japanese government, but declined the honour – that's as real as it gets. •



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◦ MAKE FOOD, NOT WAR ◦

Chefs may be variously hailed as enigmatic geniuses, irascible eccentrics or just plain workaholics, but there's no doubting that when food and art meet, movie magic is the delicious result.

By ALEX CHOMA



VATEL

If king Louis XIV ever decides to stay at your place, ask genius master chef Francois Vatel to take charge of food and entertainment and you'll be remembered forever – unless Uma Thurman decides to show up ...



BABETTE'S FEAST

A French refugee – secretly the former head chef of Cafe Anglais in Paris – shows her puritanical 19th-century Danish benefactors the pleasures of an extraordinary Gallic dinner, and helps them recapture their humanity in the process.



CHOCOLAT

In 1959, some French towns were rather religiously stern. This poses a challenge to Vianne, a young and mysterious chocolatier, who plays sensuous temptress to a whole town with her masterful chocolate creations. Her price? Johnny Depp.



CHEF

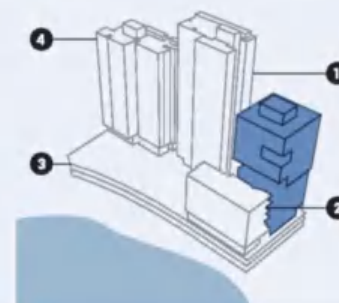
Social media is a double-edged sword for the modern chef, as this movie proves. Incriminating viral videos drive the culinary protagonist to the pits of despair, before a reinvention and tweets raving about his food truck's Cubano sandwiches see him riding high again.

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